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Comparative analysis of some Montana folksongs

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

OF SOME MONTANA FOLKSONGS

by

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PREFACE

During the summer of 1947, the Montana State University Music School Foundation and the Graduate Research Council sponsored jointly a project to collect folk songs of Montana. The field group which did the actual recording work was under the supervision of Charles R. Cutts of Billings, assisted by the writer and his wife. The group worked for about six weeks in the area around Miles City, Montana, and for about a week in and around Fort Benton, Montana.

The results of this collecting project are now on file at the School of Music, Montana State University. They, along with subsequent collections already made and some tentatively projected, are or will be available for study by graduate students and faculty members who may be interested in folk music in general, and folk music in Montana in particular. This study has grown out of such an interest.

The texts of the songs examined here were all transcribed by the writer. They represent as correctly as possible the songs as sung by the singers, including peculiarities of dialect when they were apparent. When words were unintelligible, blanks were left to indicate that fact. In some cases I have speculated about probable meanings, but I have always differentiated clearly between actual transcription and such speculation. My wife made the musical transcriptions.

Although I do not propose to treat of the musical characteristics of the songs examined, I feel, because folk songs are songs and cannot live without their music, that it is important to present the music along with the texts. The music is included in the simplest form, without the variations that occur in any stanza after the first.

For assistance in the preparation of this paper I wish to thank Dean John Crowder of the School of Music, who made the materials available; Dr. Joseph Hall, who both instructed me and inspired me in the study of folk materials; my wife, who spent many hours transcribing the music; Dr. H. G. Merriam, who was always willing to assist me; and the librarians at Montana State University, who cooperated wholeheartedly in the inevitable problems of research.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BECK	Beck, Earl Clifton. Songs of the Michigan Lumberjacks. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1942.
BEECHAM	Beecham's Portfolio, No. 6. England, (n. d.).
BELDEN	Belden, H. M. "Ballads and Songs Collected by the Missouri Folk-Lore Society." University of Missouri Studies, XV, no. 1, 1940.
BOLLES	Bolles, Martha. Hank's Songs. Bozeman, Montana: Martha Bolles, 1943. (Mimeographed.)
BOTKIN	Botkin, B. A., ed. A Treasury of American Folklore. New York: Crown Publishers, (c. 1944).
COX	Cox, John Harrington. Folk-Songs of the South. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.
EKSTORM	Eckstorm, Fannie Hardy and Smyth, Mary Winslow. Minstrelsy of Maine. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927.
Eddy	Eddy, Mary O. Ballads and Songs from Ohio. New York: J. J. Augustin, (c. 1939).
FINGER	Finger, Charles J. Frontier Ballads. New York: Doubleday, Page, 1927.
GARDNER	Gardner, Emelyn Elizabeth and Chickering, Geraldine Jencks. Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1939.
GRAY	Gray, Roland Palmer. Songs and Ballads of the Maine Lumberjacks with Other Songs from Maine. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.

JAFL	Journal of American Folklore.
LARKIN	Larkin, Margaret. Singing Cowboy. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931.
LINSCOTT	Linscott, Eloise Hubbard. Folk Songs of Old New England. New York: Macmillan, 1939.
LOMAX	Lomax, John A. Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads. New York: Macmillan, 1922.
LOMAX BAL	Lomax, John A. and Lomax, Alan. American Ballads and Folk Songs. New York: Macmillan, 1935.
LOMAX RSV	Lomax, John A. and Lomax, Alan. Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads, Revised and Enlarged. New York: Macmillan, 1938.
LOMAX SING	Lomax, John A. and Lomax, Alan. Our Singing Country. New York: Macmillan, 1941.
LOMAX SONGS	Lomax, John A. Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp. New York: Macmillan, 1920.
LUTHER	Luther, Frank. Americans and Their Songs. New York: Harper, 1942.
MACKENZIE	MacKenzie, W. Roy. Ballads and Sea Songs from Nova Scotia. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928.
POUND	Pound, Louise. American Ballads and Songs. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1922.
POUND NEB	Pound, Louise. Folk-Song of Nebraska and the Central West: A Syllabus. Nebraska Academy of Sciences Publications, IX, no. 3.
RANDOLPH	Randolph, Vance. Ozark Folksongs. Columbia, Missouri: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946, 1948. Two vols.

SANDBURG	Sandburg, Carl. The American Songbag. New York: Harcourt, Brace, (c. 1927).
SHARP	Sharp, Cecil J. and Campbell, Olive Dame. English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians. London: Oxford University Press, 1932. Two vols.
SHOEMAKER	Shoemaker, Henry W. Mountain Minstrelsy of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: Newman F. McGirr, 1931.
THORP	Thorp, N. Howard (Jack). Songs of the Cowboys. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, (c. 1921).

Certainly I must confess of my own barbousnes, I never heard the olde song of Percy and Duglas, that I found not my heart mooved more then with a Trumpet: and yet is it sung but by some blinde Crouder, with no rougher voyce, then rude stile: which being so evill apparrelled in the dust and cobwebbes of that uncivill age, what would it worke trymmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pinder?

Sir Philip Sidney
An Apologie for Poetrie

I

INTRODUCTION

> A few evenings ago I watched the young ballad-singer Richard Dyer-Bennett hold enthralled an audience that packed the concert hall to the rafters. And the portent was that this audience, assembled to hear a program composed entirely of folksongs, untouched, except at times in their delivery, by sophistication, was made up almost exclusively of young people between the ages of 20 and 30.[1]

There has been in the past decade or so in America a great revival of interest in folksongs and in folk singers. Why this should be so is not quite plain, although several factors may have contributed. Community singing of songs from home during the war certainly stimulated interest in singing--and incidentally resulted in some songs which will never see the ink of print because of their rough nature.[2] But it also gave impetus to the singing of many traditional songs.[3] Many a lad who had not sung at home joined in with his buddies overseas in a rousing songfest.

Another reason perhaps is that the popular songs turned out in such profusion in Tin Pan Alley today are not proving as satisfactory as they should. Either the song writers of

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1 J. Donald Adams, "Speaking of Books," New York Times Book Review (November 21, 1948), p. 2.

2 Marines of the Fourth Regiment on Guadalcanal and Okinawa, for instance, sang these words:

> Old Mamie Riley, how'd you get so fat?
> Old Mamie Riley, how'd you get like that?
> Went out with a Raider nine months ago.
> Shame, shame, shame on Mamie Riley.

This was certainly not the roughest in their repertoire, either.

3 A favorite of the marines mentioned above was "In the Evening by the Moonlight."

today are not so competent as they were 25 years ago--witness the revival of the tunes of the '20's--or the listeners are becoming more discriminating, and are rebelling at the feeble efforts of the modern popular composers. Most of the recent hits simply will not stand singing by the average layman, and many will not stand singing at all.

A third possibility is that the efforts of such people as Child and others who have concerned themselves with the traditional ballad and folksong are at last beginning to bear fruit. Scholars of the folksong, and indeed most educated people who are acquainted with folksongs, prefer them to more sophisticated but less worthy songs. It was not, however, until such men as Lomax began popularizing them that they began to gain widely the esteem in which they are now held. Folksongs live in any unsophisticated society, perhaps, but it is only when they become more or less commonly known that they become important in the culture of a whole community. Certainly today people of a rather sophisticated segment of society are consciously doihg much to preserve folksong, just as they are to preserve the folk dance--as many city people now square dance as country folk.

But no matter what the reason for the revival, there is no question that there is one in full swing. The great popularity of such singers as John Jacob Niles, Susan Reed, and Burl Ives attests to the interest in folk songs among classes of people who never before had any knowledge or appreciation of this sort of achievement. The songs they are now singing for the enjoyment of everyone previously belonged to a small

group. Now, through the efforts of Burl Ives, "The Blue Tail Fly" is probably as well known in America as any song except "The Star Spangled Banner." All over the country people are becoming more and more conscious of their heritage of folk-songs. Each year a number of volumes are printed containing the songs sung in a particular part of the country, and almost as often a popular song book is printed presenting arrangements of the songs discovered by the original investigators. The bibliography of this paper contains a number of such books, many of which have proved to be rather popular even among people who are not concerned with making any distinction between folksong and any other kind of song, but who like the songs and who like to sing.

These songs are turning up everywhere. While perhaps the richest source of folksong in the United States so far has been the Appalachian and Blue Ridge region, every section of the country has contributed its share. Maine has its lumberjack songs, California its '49 songs, the Mississippi its own river songs, and New England its sea chanties. The West as a region has contributed a particularly large share of American folk-song and has, by acting as a repository for the cultures of many of the other sections of the country, preserved another large share. The way in which this has been done will form a large portion of the discussion in the main part of this paper.

Montana has had its share in the development and preservation of American folksong. A relatively new state, she still contains within her borders folk singers who continue the old

tradition and the old songs. It is with that tradition in general and with those folksongs in particular that this paper is concerned. The revival already mentioned inspired it, and Montana songs only recently collected provided the materials for it.

This thesis is made up of the tunes and texts of songs found within the borders of the state, of comments on those songs and of comparisongs of them with the same or similar songs found elsewhere, and of certain bibliographical and technical paraphernalia which will make subsequent studies on the same subject easier.

The purposes to be served by this presentation are threefold. In the first place, it will preserve something which might otherwise be lost. Many folksongs are never written down, and die with the singer. Sometimes this is little loss; sometimes it is a considerable one. Partly, it is in the hope of preserving some songs, good and bad, that this thesis is written. The good songs are worthy of preservation, and the bad ones will die in spite of being recorded here, so no harm is done by presenting both.

The second and most important purpose is to compare the songs with their counterparts and variants in other parts of the United States, in the hope of emphasizing any peculiarities that may have crept into them as a result of their life in Montana lore. Folk singers are likely to take liberties with the songs they hear, and often adapt them to situations and locales far different from the originals. Sometimes they make up parallel songs, often they create parodies, and not infre-

quently they combine existing songs in a way that will suit their needs. It is not vital to the life of a folksong that these things be known about it; folksongs survive without scholarly interpretation or explanation. However, some of the changes are interesting for their own sakes, and indicate something about the kind of people who made the changes and about the society in which they lived. While it is not essential for one to know the antecedents of "Oh, Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie" in order to enjoy it, such a knowledge does add something to the total experience of hearing the song. For this reason it seems justifiable and desirable to present in this paper such information about the songs as may contribute to that knowledge.

Folksongs more often than not reflect the society in which they are made and preserved. The third purpose of this paper is to show to what degree this is true of this particular group of songs. What is the way of life pictured in these songs? Do they present the fact or the myth? How many of the songs try to mirror the realities, and how many try to escape from them? Do the songs concern the present, or deal largely with the past? These questions and their corollaries will be answered either directly or by implication. The answers will perhaps reveal a good deal that will make the songs more interesting and more easily understood.

Although the fact is certainly obvious, it had best be restated that the songs included here are only a small segment of all the songs that must be extant in Montana. Only one

variant of each song is recorded, while in reality each singer who knows the song would have his own version. There is no text to a folksong; there are only texts.

There has been no extensive folksong collecting done in Montana, and to draw from the songs in this paper any broad general statements about Montana folksongs would be a grave error. The total body of Montana folksong is not the province of this thesis; a rather intensive examination of some Montana folksongs is.

It is also obvious that the writer has not been able to gather all printed variants of the songs discussed. A large number from many sources have formed the basis for the comparisons, but since there are as many variants as there are folksong collections, to get all of them is patently impossible. The rather extensive research in the preparation of the paper did, however, uncover a number of variants sufficiently large to provide material for analysis of the way folksongs change in various hands.

The fact that this paper is not exhaustive does not mean that it is of no value. Its area of investigation is somewhat narrow, but within that area it presents a complete analysis, or one as complete as circumstances will allow. This paper is not trying to do a big job; it is trying to do a small one well.

The term "folksong" has in this chapter been frequently used but not defined. Some limitation must be put on it.

While there are almost as many definitions as there are users of the term, by a folksong is here meant one which has by oral repetition become traditional, no matter what its origin. Both narrative songs, that is, ballads, and others are included. This rather general use of the term is suggested by James Holly Hanford, who says

> A folk song may be broadly defined as any song of whatever origin which achieves wide currency independent of print, and is remembered and sung over a considerable period of time. In other words a folk song is a song which has become traditional.[4]

Although this definition would not satisfy the purist, especially not the student of the traditional ballad,[5] it is sufficient for the purposes of this study, which has little to do with the traditional ballad. Folksongs maintain their lives by being sung, not by being printed. (This paper can not in itself preserve any folksongs as such unless they continue to be sung. It can only record what once was sung.) Folksong is "song alive, a living organism, subject to all the conditions, and manifesting all the phenomena of growth and change."[6] Much of what is considered folksong in the following discussion is of known origin, much of it appears

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4 Mary O. Eddy, Ballads and Songs from Ohio (New York: J. J. Augustin, [c. 1939]), p. xv.

5 Lomax says, "Have we any American ballads? Let us frankly confess, that, according to the definitions of the best critics of the ballad, we have none at all." John A. Lomax, "Some Types of American Folk-Song," JAFL, XXVIII (1915), p. 1.

6 Phillips Barry, Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, and Mary Winslow Smyth, British Ballads from Maine (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), p. xviii.

in a form quite different from the form found in the traditional ballads, and much of it has seen print many times; still, it has survived principally in the oral tradition, and is yet in the process of change. Because of this, and despite its literary origin,[7] it is truly folksong. The most important feature of folksongs, ballads or otherwise, is that they are sung. All of the songs considered here have been sung and have been changed by oral repetition; by that virtue they still live.

The songs examined in the following chapters certainly reflect something of the society in which they were made and in which they persist. They come from a section of the state devoted principally to the raising of cattle, and deal mainly with the way of life of the cowboy, that now departed character who is the West's chief contribution to both folklore and the national myth. A more comprehensive survey of Montana folksong than the one providing the materials for this study would probably contain songs about many professions, about many ways of life. Montana certainly has mining songs which tell a good deal about the way of life of a miner,[8]

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7 Alice Corbin Henderson in the introduction to Songs of the Cowboys says, "The fact that most of these songs are of known authorship, or that some of them appeared originally in print, in no way lessens their genuine folk-quality." N. Howard Thorp, Songs of the Cowboys (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, [c. 1921]), p. xvii.

8 An article by Dr. Wayland Hand on songs of the Butte miners will appear in an early issue of Western Folklore. The writer of this thesis assisted in the collection of the materials and the preparation of the MS.

and probably a number which reflect the life of a lumberjack, a railroad man, or an oilman. Montana has in her history supported a number of different industries, each of which has no doubt left behind it a record in song. This particular thesis deals with only one of those industries, cattle raising.

Of the subsequent chapters, the second, dealing with cowboy songs, is the most important, containing over half of the songs, and including all of those closely connected with ranching and the cowboy's life. Chapter III presents songs about outlaws and law enforcement. Chapter IV includes a miscellaneous collection of songs, many brought into Montana from other parts of the country, and others adapted from earlier songs. Each of the chapters and subdivisions within the chapter is introduced by a few general remarks apropos the whole section, and each of the songs is examined in some detail. At the end of the paper are bibliographies helpful for reference and further study.

II

THE COWBOY AND HIS SONGS

> From 1870 to 1890 one million mustang ponies and twelve million head of longhorn cattle were driven up the trail from Texas to markets in Kansas, Wyoming, Montana, and other Western states. . . . Behind and around and ahead of each bunch of cattle rode a group of men, mostly very young, bold, youthful vikings of the seas of sage grass through which they pushed their way. . . . They rode with a song on their lips, voicing youth, the freedom and the wilderness of the plains. Hence came cowboy songs.[1]

Of the several industries that contributed to the early growth of Montana, probably none was more important, and certainly none was more colorful, than cattle raising. Hundreds of thousands of cattle grazed the plains and rolling hills of eastern and central Montana during the last two decades of the 19th century. Spurred on by the promise of quick and fabulous wealth,[2] exploiters descended by the hundreds on the rich grass lands of the state, and the boom was under way. Longhorn cattle

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1 LOMAX REV, p. xv.

2 Extravagant phrases like the following from James Sanks Brisbin, The Beef Bonanza; or, How to Get Rich on the Plains (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1881) did much to attract Easterners to Montana. Unfortunately, the author wrote with more enthusiasm than good sense and experience.

"The grazing cannot be excelled in any country in the world." (P.163) "As a stock-growing region Montana surpasses all other sections of our great West." (P. 167) "The immense profits to be derived from stock-growing are just beginning to be understood, and every ranchman who can get together a few head of cattle, sheep, or horses is going at it." (P. 170)

Many unqualified people, persuaded to come west by this glowing account, ultimately failed in the cattle business.

from Texas fed on the ancient range of the buffalo, and the cowboy rode and camped on the traditional hunting ground of the Indian.

There had been cattle in Montana as early as 1833,[3] and Conrad Kohrs in 1865 had begun to raise cattle on a large scale near Deer Lodge.[4] In 1866 Nelson Story brought 600 head of cattle up from Fort Worth to the Gallatin Valley,[5] some of the first, if not the first, Texas cattle to come into the state. After 1876, the year of Custer's last stand, the Indian problem was solved (brutally, but finally), and when the last of the buffalo disappeared within the next decade, there was nothing to stand in the way of further expansion of the already booming business—except the weather. Granville Stuart, one of the most influential of Montana pioneers, has this to say about the rapid growth of the cattle business:

> In the fall of 1883 there was not one buffalo remaining on the range and the antelope, elk, and deer were indeed scarce. In 1880 no one had heard tell of a cowboy in "this niche of the woods" [in central Montana around the Judith Mountains] and Charlie Russell had made no pictures of them; but in the fall of 1883 there were six hundred thousand head of cattle on the range.[6]

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3 Merrill G. Burlingame, The Montana Frontier (Helena, Montana: State Publishing Co., [c. 1942]), p. 262.

4 Ibid., p. 265.

5 Ibid., p. 266. See also Granville Stuart, Forty Years on the Frontier (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1925), II, 196 and Ernest Staples Osgood, The Day of the Cattleman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929), p. 21.

6 Stuart, op. cit., II, 188. Stuart, while not making sufficiently clear the limitation of his term "the range," amply illustrates the speed with which the cattle industry expanded. Wellman says there were 600,000 cattle in Montana in 1883. Paul I. Wellman, The Trampling Herd (New York: Carrick and Evans, Inc., [c. 1939]), p. 222.

As a matter of fact, the business expanded too rapidly, with the result that ranchers practiced range use policies detrimental to the best interests of a stable industry. The "hard winter" of 1886-7, which ruined many a rancher and resulted in the loss of an estimated 40 to 60 per cent of the cattle in the state,[7] taught a bitter lesson, and forced the survivors to put the business on a sounder basis. Though the next few years brought good weather, the day of the open range was over, and methods of ranching changed.[8] What made the great storm of the 80's so serious was that Montana had depended too largely upon the steer, just as the Irish had on the potato earlier in the century. According to Pelzer, "The East produced more cattle but the West made it the main business instead of an incident of agriculture."[9]

In the early days the cattle business was a risky one, and also a dangerous and colorful one. The cowboy,[10] the knight errant of the plains, the mythical hero both then and now of school boys all over the country, made the business the

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7 Joseph Kinsey Howard, Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome (New Haven: Yale University Press, [c. 1943]), p. 160. See also Stuart, op. cit., II, 233-7.

8 Osgood, op. cit., p. 224.

9 Louis Pelzer, The Cattlemen's Frontier (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), p. 20. See also Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Ginn and Co., [c. 1931]), p. 226.

10 "It put me in mind of the eastern girl that asks her mother: 'Ma,' says she, 'do cowboys eat grass?' 'No, dear,' says the old lady, 'they're part human,' an' I don't know but the old gal had 'em sized up right. If they are humen, they're a separate species." Charles M. Russell, Trails Plowed Under (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1927), p. 1.

glamorous occupation it became. "The cowboy, with all his color and flash, was at the very center of the entire range industry."[11] There is neither room nor need in this paper to expand upon the subject of the cowboy and the myth that surrounds him,[12] except in so far as the cowboy was a singer and perpetuated the folksong tradition.

The cowboys did sing, of that there can be no question. Whether they sang from necessity or from motives of entertaining is a moot point, to be discussed in more detail later, but that they did sing is certain. Teddy Blue Abbott hints that the ability to sing may have sometimes been more necessary than skill with cattle:

> If I say it myself, I was a hell of a good cowhand. After we got up to the mouth of the Musselshell that fall, Newman asked Johnny Burgess who he was keeping on for the winter and Burgess, starting to name them, said: "Teddy Blue." Newman said: "What are you keeping him for?"—because I was a new man.
>
> "Well," Burgess says, "he can sing."[13]

Lomax quotes J. M. Grigsby of Fort Worth, Texas, as saying:

> The trail boss would never pick on [employ] a fellow that couldn't sing and whistle, and we boys would consider it a dull day's drive if we didn't add at least one verse. And bad, dark nights the cowboy that could keep up the most racket was the pet of the bunch. We called him the bellwether, and he always brought up his side of the herd.[14]

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11 Burlingame, op. cit., p. 274.

12 E. C. Abbott and Helena Huntingdon Smith, We Pointed Them North (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., [c. 1939]) is one of the most readable accounts of authentic cowboy life. See also Andy Adams, The Log of a Cowboy (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927), Con Price, Trails I Rode (Pasadena, California: Trail's End Publishing Co., 1947), and Granville Stuart, op. cit..

13 Abbott, op. cit., p. 114.

14 LOMAX REV, p. xv. (The brackets are Lomax's.)

R. S. Scott, an old time cowpuncher, relates that nearly every well established ranch had its own individual song; each visitor was expected to add to the store of songs, and in exchange took away any novelties of his hosts.[15]

This sort of tradition encouraged the preservation as well as the creation of folksong. For the most part, the cowboy, like other folk singers, sang about the things he knew best, his own life and hardships and work. He sang about " work, death, heroes, love, amusement, humor, and religion."[16] There was, as a matter of fact, little else in the way of amusement that a cowboy could do to while away his few leisure hours. Usually men of little learning, and too far away from centers of population to obtain reading material, the punchers turned naturally to the age-old pastime, community singing. They sang in the bunkhouses and around the campfires, and they sang while riding night herd on their cattle. Most of the time, though not always, they sang about themselves and their life.

This chapter presents fourteen cowboy songs which were sung in Montana as recently as 1947. Some of them have been in Montana tradition for fifty years or more; in several cases, evidence for that fact is cited in this paper. Others are of a more recent vintage. Old and new, they tell something about the cowboy, his ideals, his work, and his way of life. The songs are presented under five headings, songs of heroic and

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15 Ibid., p. xvi.

16 Joseph J. Cadlo, "Cowboy Life as Reflected in Cowboy Songs," Western Folklore, VI (October, 1947), p. 335.

tragic deaths, work songs, soothing songs, humorous songs, and miscellaneous songs which do not fit into any of the other categories. These classifications are not mutually exclusive, and there would certainly be justification for other arrangements. The one here chosen is only one of several possibilities.

Here are some of the cowboy songs of Montana.

SONGS OF HEROIC AND TRAGIC DEATHS

> Cowboys used to love to sing about people dying; I don't know why. I guess it was because they were so full of life themselves.[17]

Punching cows was a dangerous occupation. The Texas longhorn, a critter much different from his purebred Hereford successor, was hard to tame. He caused the death of many a good hand on the early range.

The greatest single hazard on the range was a stampede, when a whole herd of cattle, often numbering over a thousand, would take off in a frightened flight, scared by thunder, a coyote, or the popping of a saddle girth. The cowboy and cowpony who got in the way of such a mob were in serious trouble.

This section includes mostly songs about cowboys killed in stampedes.

UTAH CARROLL

Recorded in Ashland, Montana, June 18, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbeman.

This song is printed in LOMAX, LOMAX REV, and LARKIN under the same title, and in RANDOLPH as "Utah Carl."[18]

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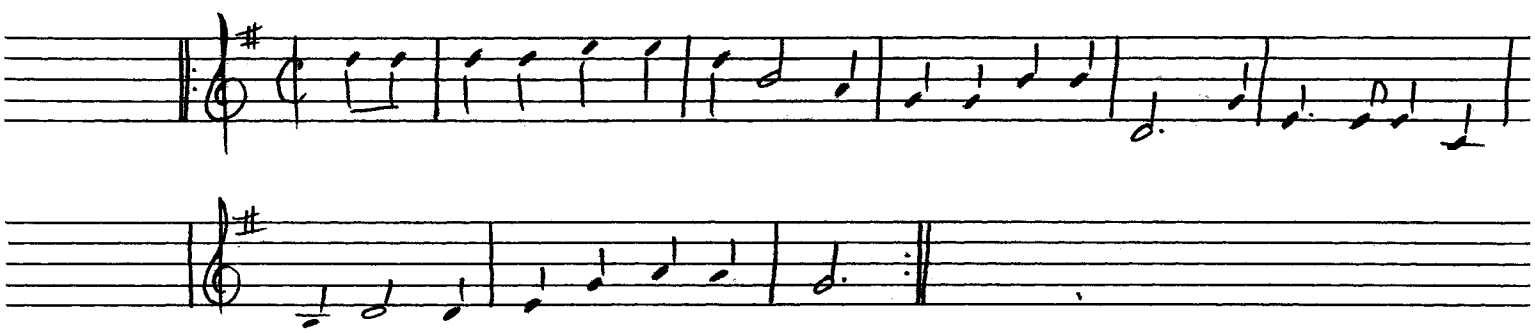
17 Abbott, op. cit., p. 261.

18 For a key to the volumes represented in capital letters, see List of Abbreviations.



Utah Carroll

1. In a far off western country, where friends are few and dear,
   Where cattle roam by thousands, and the skies are always clear,

2. We were rounding up one morning, when the work was nearly done,
   When the cattle they stampeded in a wild and maddened run.

3. The boss's little daughter was a-holding on that side;
   She tried to check the cattle, 'twas a wild and dangerous ride.

4. Beneath the lassie's saddle early on that fatal morn,
   I placed a scarlet blanket, a mistake I'll always morn.

5. The cattle saw that blanket, it raked their maddened brain.
   They bore down on the lassie as Boss rode by again.

6. The boss's little daughter rode the best horse on the round,
   But he stumbled in a dog hole, and he threw her to the ground.

7. The cattle would have gored her, she surely would have died,
   But someone spurred his cowhorse like lightning to her side.

8. He hung down from his pony, and he caught her from the ground;
   The cinch it broke beneath them, and once more hurled them down.

9. From the dust sprang Utah Caroll, the blanket waving gay,
He led off at an angle, and the cattle came his way.

10. Far out on the prairie, Bess safe on the other side,
He stopped to face the cattle, now a wild and maddened tide.

11. His pistol flashed like lightning, it sounded loud and clear,
He failed to stop the cattle, but he dropped the leading steer.

12. A thousand hoofs were pounding, and a thousand flashing horns
Snuffed out the life of Utah, the bravest hero born.

13. In a far off western country, where friends are few and dear,
Stands a humble little headstone, 'neath skies that's always clear.

14. The rancher's little daughter, now she often comes to pray
For the man who died so freely to save her life that day.

Although no information is available about the time or place of origin of this song, it was probably written before 1900, perhaps not in Utah, and possibly by some range composer like 'Jack' Thorp. Whatever its age, the song has been in existence long enough to have appeared in variants considerably different from one another in diction and length, though the content has not materially changed.

Of the five variants examined, the Montana song is, judged by artistic standards (and when folksongs are judged by literate people such standards are frequently used), the best, because it accomplishes its task with a minimum of words. The brevity of statement sustains the dramatic effect, yet does not sacrifice any of the essential elements in the narrative. Oral repetition, or conscious artistry, has cleared the song of superfluous detail, so that it displays to some extent the "leaping and ling-

ering" characteristic of the traditional ballad. This shorter version may have developed from a longer one of an earlier day, when length rather than brevity was a virtue, since making noise or killing time was the primary purpose for singing.

The story is the same in all five variants; some tell it with more descriptive information than others, the Montana variant using the least of all. The name of the girl involved, the boss's little daughter, appears as Bess in the Montana song, as Lenore and Varro elsewhere. In all variants a red blanket is the cause of the trouble, and Utah Carroll (or Carl) saves the day by his act of heroism--and dies in the process.

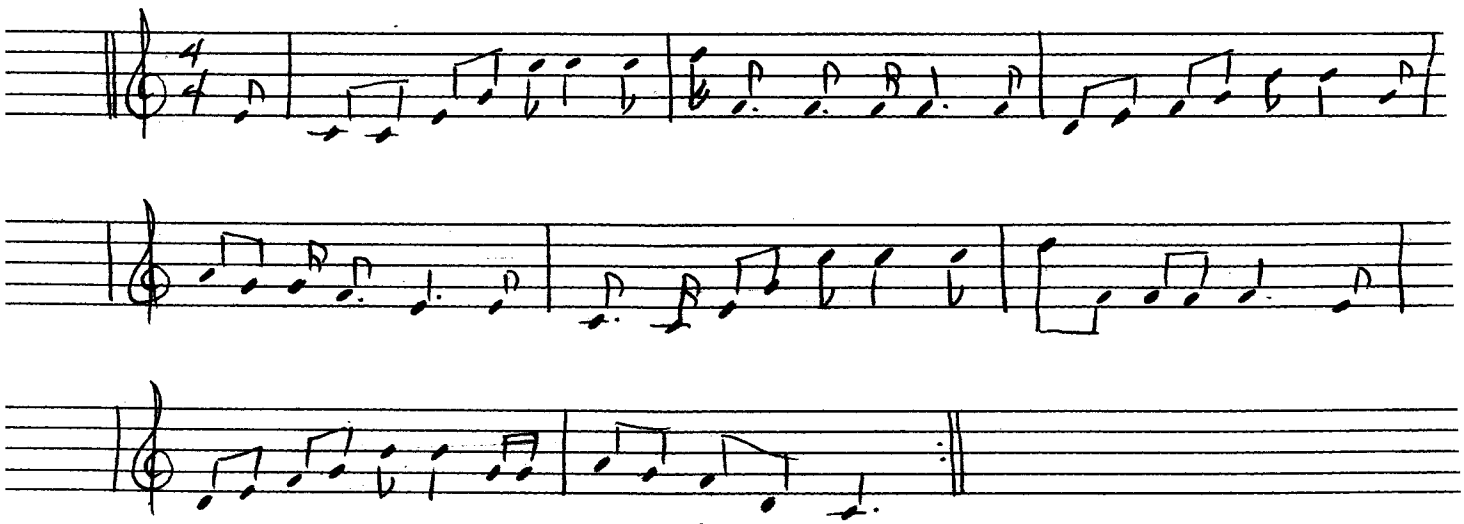
Such a song, extolling the bravery of a common cowboy, and at the same time dealing with a danger familiar to them all, surely must have been popular with the cowboys. Violent death was no stranger to them; they could sing about it as easily as about any other part of their experience.

There is in the next song a certain dramatic irony, which may have contributed to its wide currency. Here are a stampede and a death, but no rescue, no red blanket, and no boss's daughter. The dead man is to be even more pitied than Utah Carroll, since he died without having the opportunity to be a hero, and without achieving his last wish.

WHEN THE WORK'S ALL DONE THIS FALL

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, June 30, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

The song is printed in SANDBURG, LOMAX, LOMAX REV, and LUTHER under the same title.



When the Work's All Done This Fall

1. A group of jolly cowboys, discussing plans at ease,
Said one, "I'll tell you something, if you will listen, please.
I am an old cowpuncher, and here I'm dressed in rags;
I used to be a tough one, and I took on great big jags.
But I have got a home, boys, and a good one you all know,
Although I have not seen it since long, long ago,
But I'm a-going back to Dixie once more to see them all;
I'm a-going to see my mother when the work's all done this fall."

2. That very night this cowboy went out to stand his guard;
The night was dark and cloudy, and a-storming very hard.
Well, the cattle they got frightened and they rushed in a wild stampede.
This cowboy tried to head them while riding at full speed.
While riding in the darkness so loudly did he shout,
Trying his best to head them and turn the herd about,
But his saddle horse he stumbled, and on him he did fall;
Poor boy won't see his mother when the work's all done this fall.

3. His body was so mangled that the boys all thought him dead;
They picked him up so gently and laid him on a bed.
He opened wide his blue eyes, and looking all around,
He motioned for his comrades to set near him on the ground.
"Now, boys, send Mother my wages, the wages I have earned,
For I am afraid, boys, my last year I have turned.
I'm a-going to that new range, I hear the Master call,
And I'll not see my mother when the work's all done this fall."

4. Poor Charlie sleeps on the prairie, no tombstone at his head,
Nothing but a little board, and this is all it said:
"Well, Charlie died at daybreak, he died from a fall,
And he'll not see his mother when the work's all done this fall."

This song was written, according to the singer, by D. J. O'Mallie of Miles City in the 90's, the same O'Mallie who wrote the next song in this section, "The Death of Charley Rutlage."[19] With this version of authorship Lomax agrees, but he presents another possibility for its origin.[20]

Despite its literary origin,[21] this song shows some rather interesting folksong characteristics, probably as a result of its life in the oral tradition. The variations in the different texts, gathered in different parts of the country, are not

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19 For further information about O'Mallie see the notes to "Charlie Rutlage."

20 "D. J. O'Malley of the S. A. ranch, near Miles City, Montana, claims to be the author of this song. On October 6, 1893, the Stock Growers Journal of Miles City published the words with the caption, 'After the Round-up,' giving the author as D. J. White. Another informant, Lee Lytton of Fort Worth, Texas, supplied a full text with the remark that the song originated on the Spotted Wood trail, 140 miles out of Deadwood, Wyoming, and was based on an actual happening." LOMAX NEW, p. 74.
The confusion between O'Mallie and White is cleared up in the discussion of the next song. The original text as printed in the Stock Growers Journal is not now available.

21 Literary origin simply means that the song is the conscious artistic product of a single writer.

markedly extreme, but they do indicate that the song has been disseminated more by word of mouth than by manuscript. The singer in each case has apparently adapted the text to his own needs, a device not unusual in folk singers, as further discussion in this paper will indicate. The refrain is retained in all variants, as it is in many folksongs, such as for instance in "The Chisholm Trail." It is only one line in this song, but serves its purpose of holding the stanzas together, and of reiterating the main theme of the song.

The Montana variant consists of 28 lines, three full eight-line stanzas and half of another, containing the refrain four times in all. The stanzaic and rhythmic patterns suggest that there were at least 32 lines in the original, or perhaps 40, as there are in several of the variants. Despite its relative shortness, the Montana song presents a complete action, though one not quite so detailed as some in the other texts.

One motif which appears in several variants but not in the Montana song is that of the weeping mother, whose "heart is breaking, breaking for me, that's all." It appears again in "Custer's Last Fight," and, in a slightly different form, in "The Girl I Left Behind Me," both to be discussed later. It is not uncommon in folksong.

In all but the Montana variant of this song, one stanza is devoted to the disposition of the dying man's belongings, much in the manner of the "bequeathings" in such traditional ballads as "Edward" and "Lord Randall." The beneficiaries vary considerably, perhaps according to the singers' ac-

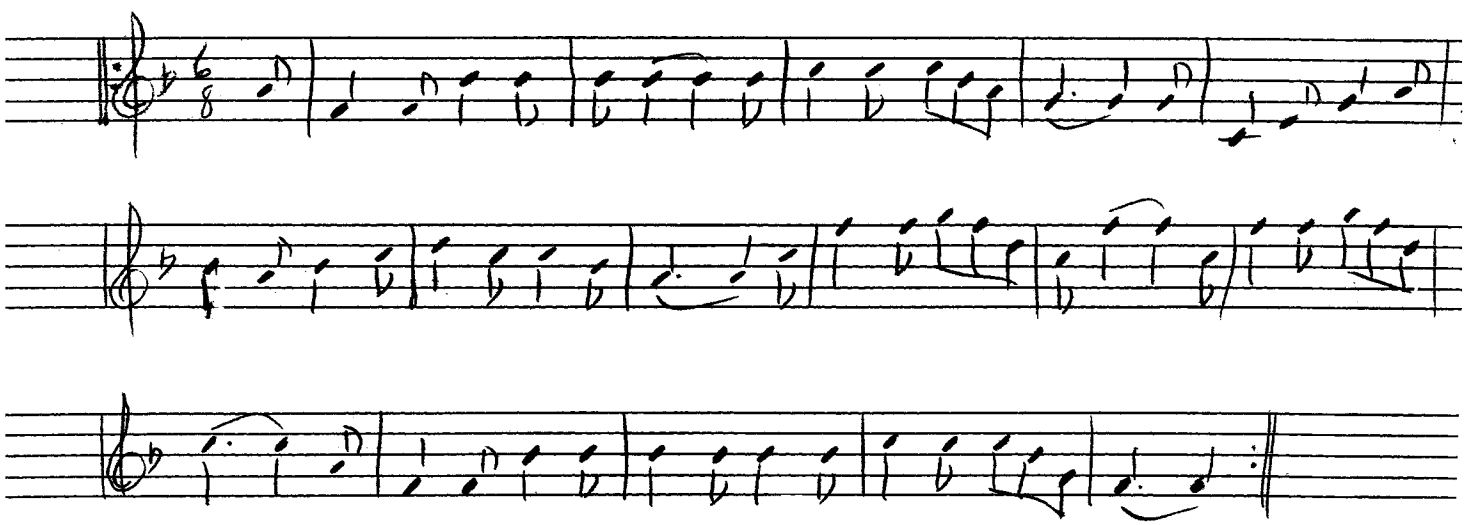
quaintanceships or hearers, but the possessions remain essentially the same, a saddle, a bed, and a gun. That is not strange: it was all most cowboys had.

This song may or may not have been inspired, directly or indirectly, by an actual incident, as Lomax suggests; about the next one there is no question. Charley Rutlage died as the song says he did. Although he wasn't killed by a stampede, he died on the job just the same.

THE DEATH OF CHARLEY RUTLAGE

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, June 30, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

Variants identical to each other are printed in LOMAX and LOMAX REV under the title of "Charlie Rutlage."



The Death of Charley Rutlage

1. Another poor cowpuncher has gone to meet his fate,
But we hope he's found a resting place inside the
Pearly Gate.
A good man's place is vacant on the ranch of the XIT,
And it will be hard to find another that's liked as
well as he.

2. It was first Kid White from the Flying E's, then Frillo (?)
young and brave,
Now Charley Rutlage gives a third that's been sent to his
grave
By horses falling on them while working on the range,
So far from home and all alone, no friends to meet again.

3. So bright he went forth that morning on a circle o'er
the hills,
So full of fun and free from care, no thought of earthly
ills,
But when he went to clean the herd on the works which he
was sent
How little he thought his time on earth was very nearly
spent.

4. One XIT would not go out and ran back in the herd,
But Charley shoved him out again, his cutting horse he
spurred.
When another started to come back, to head him Charley
tried;
The creature fell, his horse was thrown, beneath him
Charley died.

5. It was a sad fate for a man to meet out on this lonely lea.
His relative in Texas lives, no more his face to see.
But we hope our Father will greet him with a bright and
smiling face,
And with his right hand seat him by the shining throne
of grace.

There is no doubt about the origin of this song. Lomax says it "was first published in the Stock Growers Journal, Miles City, Montana, July 11, 1891, signed D. J. White (D. J. O'Malley)."[22] Confirmation of this theory of origin is offered by the singer, "Montana Bill" Roberts, in a letter to the writer dated January 29, 1948. (Roberts' spellings of O'Mallie and

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22 LOMAX REV, p. 82.

Charley Rutlage have been used throughout the discussion of this song.)

> Now, as to Charley Rutlage. He was a Texas cowboy and a good one. He was working for the XIT outfit. They had made a round-up on Tomson Creek, 60 miles north of Miles City. Charley was cutting out a stubborn steer. This steer fell down. Charley's horse ran over him and fell, crushing Charley under him. He was placed in a wagon and was started to Miles City to the doctor. Charley died on the way in. He is buried here in the Miles City cemetery.
>
> D. J. O'Mallie composed this song in 1896 or 97, as it came out in the Miles City paper at that time. D. J. O'Mallie's father died when he was a mere boy. His mother afterwards married a man by the name of White. When D. J. was 14 he started to riding for cow outfits, and as his mother's name was White, the boys nicknamed him Kid White. In a few years he hired out to the N-N outfit. The cowboys dropped the White and called him the N-N Kid, which stayed with him all through his long lifetime. D. J. O'Mallie was a great character. He attended all our reunions here in Miles City. I knew him personally. We were great friends. I once gave a hatband I had made of beads. He worshiped it, and at his death, his wife sent it back to me to be placed in our museum.[23]
>
> D. J. O'Mallie was a good all-around hand, a bronc rider, a good roper, a cook, and could do all work pertaining to ranch life, and before his death he asked to be brought back to the old cow town of Miles City, and to be buried where the sagebrush grows. His wish was granted. I was one of the pall bearers, and we all six of us rode horseback out to the cemetery.

The information contained in this letter clears up the question of authorship of both this and the preceding song, at the same time furnishing a good example of how actual events are put into folksongs.

The fact that Lomax has found a good variant of this song in Texas indicates that it has more than a strictly local currency. A song of Montana origin, it has become a part of

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23 Roberts is the caretaker of the Range Riders Reunion museum in Miles City. Many interesting relics of the early days are displayed there.

the folksong heritage of the West.

The original song is not available for purposes of comparison. In the absence of a printed copy, one may assume that the Montana variant is nearer the original than the Lomax variant from Texas, since the Montana singer was a personal friend of the composer.

The Montana and Texas variants are substantially the same. Although some minor differences in detail occur, the description of the incident which killed Charley is alike in both. Where there are differences, the Montana variant is usually more logical or more authentic. For instance, Charley was probably trying to cut the XIT cattle <u>out</u> of the herd (see the letter quoted), and not trying to run them back <u>in</u> it, as the Lomax variant reports. At any rate, Charley died beneath his cutting horse; on that the variants agree.

There is another and more significant difference in the second stanzas. The Lomax stanza says

> The first that died was Kid White, a man both tough and brave,
> While Charlie Rutledge makes the third to be sent to his grave.

Who was the second? An answer is offered in the Montana text:

> It was first Kid White from the Flying E's, then Frillo young and brave,
> Now Charley Rutlage gives a third that's been sent to his grave.

If there has been an error in transcribing, and Frillo should really be read as "fellow," the Montana lines are no more logical than the others.

The really perplexing question about the song is how could

Kid White, the author, talk about the death of Kid White, the cowboy? Were there two Kid Whites? Did O'Mallie include his own nickname just for a lark, or perhaps in order to perpetuate his memory? Did Kid White actually write the song after all? Or have subsequent singers substituted his name for another, perhaps through ignorance of the author, or perhaps in deference to him? Any answers would of course be only speculation: O'Mallie himself is dead.

In this song, as in the preceding one, there appears a religious sentiment, or at least a religious utterance. While cowboys obviously could not be churchgoers and were not religious in the orthodox way, they were not complete infidels. The few of their songs devoted exclusively to religion are for the most part sentimental.[24]

The most pitiful of all songs about death from stampedes is the next one, in which the deceased is not even a full-fledged cowboy. It deals with many aspects of life on the round-up, but depends for its dramatic effect upon the roaring stampede.

LITTLE JOE, THE WRANGLER

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 7, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

This song may be found in THORP, LOMAX, LOMAX REV, LARKIN, and RANDOLPH under the same title.

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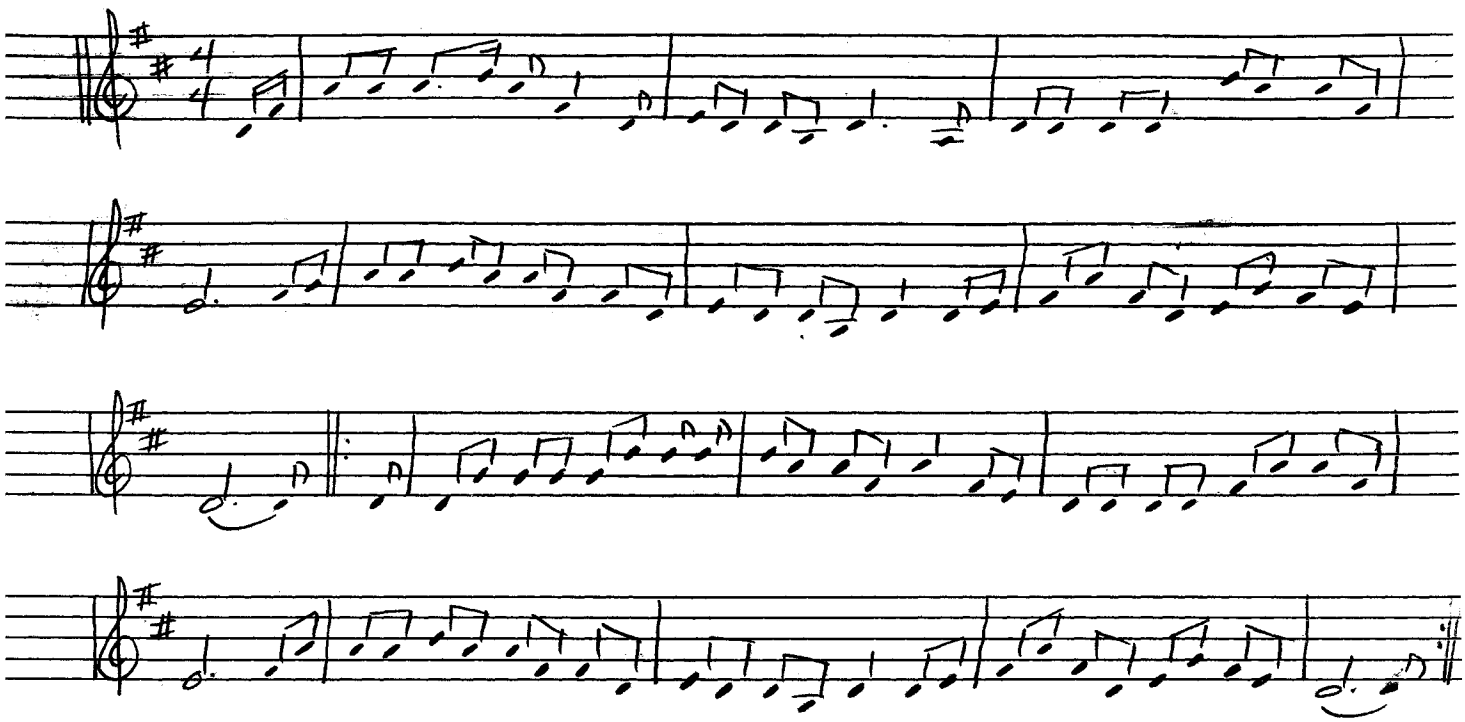
24 Examples are "The Cowboy at Church" and "The Cowboy's Dream," from which the following stanza comes:

They say there will be a great roundup,
And cowboys, like dogies, will stand,
To be mavericked by the Riders of Judgment
Who are posted and know every brand.

LOMAX REV, p. 46.



Little Joe, the Wrangler

1. O, it's little Joe the wrangler, he'll wrangle never more,
His days with the remuda,[25] they are o'er.
'Twas a year ago last April that he rode into our camp,
Just a little Texas stray and nothing more.

2. It was late in the evening he rode up to our herd
On a little Texas pony he called Chaw,
With his broken shoes and overalls a tougher looking kid
You never in your life before had saw.

3. His saddle was a texas knack[26] made many years ago
With an OK spur on one foot lightly hung.
His hot roll[27] in a cotton sack so loosely tied behind
And his canteen from his saddle horn was swung.

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25 The herd of saddle horses on a round-up.

26 A saddle. Originally Indian word for canoe.

27 Bed roll.

4. He said he'd had to leave his home, his pa had married twice,
And his new ma whipped him every day or two,
So he saddled up old Chew one night and lit his shuck this way,[28]
And now he's trying to paddle his own canoe.

5. He said if we would give him work he'd do the best he could,
Though he didn't know straight up about a cow,
So the boss he cut him out a mount and kindly put him on
For he sort of liked that little kid somehow.

6. Teach him to wrangle horses, to try to know them all,
To get them in at daylight if he could,
To follow the chuckwagon and always hitch a team
And help the cocinero[29] rustle wood.

7. We had driven to the Pecos, the weather being fine,
We had camped on the south side in a bend,
When a norther[30] commenced blowing, we had doubled up our guard,
For it taken all of us to hold them in.

8. Little Joe the wrangler was called out with the rest,
Though the kid had scarcely reached the herd,
When the cattle they stampeded, like a hailstorm on they fled,
And we were all a-riding for the lead.

9. Amidst the streaks of lightning a horse we saw ahead,
'Twas little Joe the wrangler in the lead.
He was riding old Blue Rocket with a slicker o'er his head
And a-trying to check the cattle in their speed.

10. Well, at length we got them milling and kind of quieted down,
While the extry guards back to their beds did go,
But there was one a-missing, we knew it at a glance--
'Twas our little Texas stray, poor wrangling Joe.

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28 Cigarettes were often wrapped in shucks, and were lighted in the direction the rider was facing; hence, the expression.

29 The cook on the round-up. Cf. Sugar in the Williams Cartoon "Out Our Way."

30 Cold wind from the north.

11. Next morning just at daybreak we found where Rocket fell,
Down in a washout twenty feet below,
And beneath the horse smashed to a pulp, his spur had
rung his knell,
Was our little Texas stray, poor wrangling Joe.

A stampede was really a fearful ordeal. Teddy Blue Abbott's description of one he experienced makes the blood run cold.

> If a storm come and the cattle started running--you'd hear that low rumbling noise along the ground and the men on herd wouldn't need to come and tell you, you'd know--then you'd jump for your horse and get out there in the lead, trying to head them and get them into a mill before they scattered to hell and gone. It was riding at a dead run in the dark, with cut banks and prairie dog holes all around you, not knowing if the next jump would land you in a shallow grave. . . .
>
> And that night it come up an awful storm. It took all four of us to hold the cattle and we didn't hold them, and when morning come there was one man missing. We went back to look for him, and we found him among the prairie dog holes, beside his horse. The horse's ribs was scraped bare of hide, and all the rest of horse and man was mashed into the ground as flat as a pancake. The only thing you could recognize was the handle of his six-shooter. We tried to think the lightning hit him, and that was what we wrote his folks down in Henrietta, Texas. But we couldn't believe it ourselves. I'm afraid it wasn't lightning. I'm afraid his horse stepped into one of them holes and they both went down before the stampede.[31]

Little Joe, Teddy Blue's friend, and Utah Carroll all met the same fate: "A thousand hoofs were pounding, and a thousand flashing horns. . . ." Abbott's description of an actual stampede indicates that the writers of at least two western songs were not unfamiliar with the conditions they wrote about.

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31 Abbott, op. cit., pp. 42-3.

About the origin of the ballad of Little Joe there is no doubt. N. Howard 'Jack' Thorp says it was written "by me on trail of herd of O cattle from Chimney Lake, New Mexico, to Higgins, Texas, 1890."[32] Despite its literary origin, however, this song has been widely transmitted in several ways: by oral transmission, by radio, and by phonograph records. Thorp says that it became "one of the most widely sung and best liked of cowboy songs. I have no idea how often it has been sung over the radio in the last few years. I do know that it has been put on phonograph records and more than 375,000 of them have been sold."[33] Its appearance in several collections of folksongs indicates that it has been passed along among folk singers to a wide extent, too. One method of learning folk songs now is from records rather than from singers themselves, and the fact that this song was commercially recorded may account for some of the variants printed in folksong collections.

The several variants considered in this paper are all essentially similar. Except for the inevitable minor word changes that take place in the repetition of songs in an oral tradition, there are few differences. The substitutions of "pa" for "daddy" and "Chaw" for "Chow" are not important. Thorp's song, the original from which the others have developed, gives the location of the disaster as the Red River, all the others listing the Pecos, again a minor discrepancy. The fact that the Missouri variant

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32 TWOMP, p. 96.

33 'Jack' Thorp, "Banjo in the Cow Camps," Atlantic Monthly, CLXVI (1940), p. 203.

printed by Randolph reads,

And help the cook Lorena rustle wood

rather than,

And help the cocinero rustle wood

as all the others do, may be the result of the singer's lack of knowledge of both Spanish and round-up customs, perhaps because of a geographical location far from both. Folk singers are more likely to distort unfamiliar words than familiar ones.

Little Joe arrived rather late on the western scene, but he has made a secure place for himself in western tradition.[34]

The most widely known of the songs of death of this group, and perhaps of all cowboy songs, is the next one. The cause of the condition of the dying cowboy is not mentioned; he, too, may have been the victim of a stampede.

OH, BURY ME NOT ON THE LONE PRAIRIE

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 30, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

This song, or fragments of it, is printed in RANDOLPH (A), LUTHER, JAFL XIV, POUND, POUND NEB, and SANDBURG under the same title; in BELDEN (B) as "Oh, Bury Me Not;" in SHOEMAKER, JAFL XXV, JAFL XLV, and LARKIN as "The Lone Prairie;" in BELDEN (A, B, and C), THORP, LOMAX, COX (A and B), and LOMAX NEW as "The

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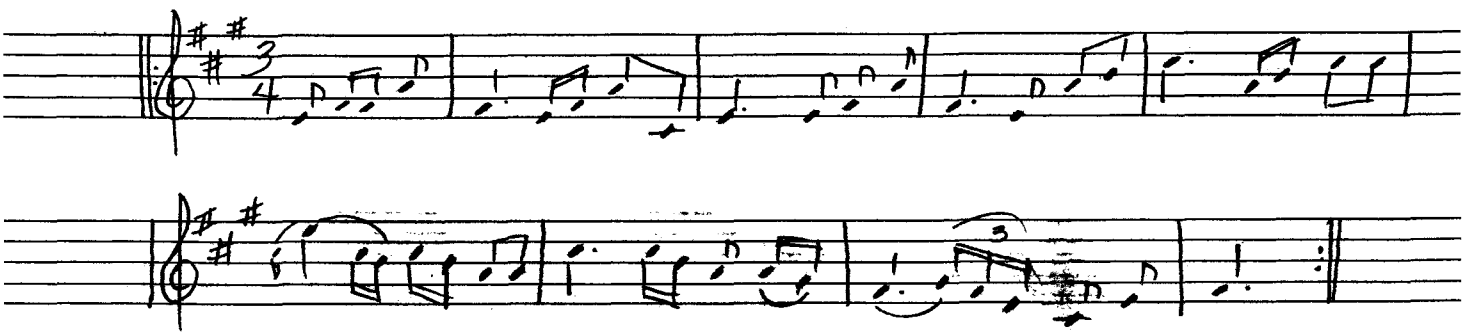
34 A sequel, "Little Joe the Wrangler's Sister Nell," appears in RANDOLPH, II, 236-7.

Dying Cowboy;" in BOLLES as "The Cowboy's Lament;" in SHARP as "The Lonesome Prairie;" and in RANDOLPH (B) and BELDEN (B) without title.[35]



Oh, Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie

1. "O, bury me not on the lone prairie."
These words came sad and mournfully
From the pallid lips of a youth who lay
On his dying cot at the close of day.

2. "O, bury me not on the lone prairie,
Where the wild coyotes may howl o'er me,
Where the rattlesnakes live and the winds blow free,
O, bury me not on the lone prairie."

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35 Letters in parentheses indicate variants within the same volume.

3. O, the cowboys gathered around his bed
To hear what the dying cowboy said.
"O, comrades dear, take warning pray,
Don't leave your homes for the lone prairie.

4. "O, it matters not, so I've oft been told,
Where the body lies when the heart grows cold,
But grant, O grant me this dying plea:
O, bury me not on the lone prairie.

5. "Don't listen to enticing words
From men that own big droves and herds,
For if you do you'll rue the day
When you leave home for the lone prairie.

6. "O, I wish I was in a mother's care;
A sister's tears would mingle there.
My friends would come, they would bury me;
O, bury me not on the lone prairie.

7. "O, I've oft times wished to be laid when I died
In the old churchyard by my mother's side.
By my mother's side may my grave then be--
O, bury me not on the lone prairie.

8. "O, bury me not--" and his voice failed there,
But they paid no heed to his dying prayer.
In a lonely grave just six by three
He was laid to rest on the lone prairie.

The prairie could indeed be a lonely place. Ranches were few and relatively isolated, and the quiet must have been sometimes overwhelming. Mrs. Nannie Tiffany Alderson, a pioneer in the Miles City area, records in her book of reminiscences some of her reactions to the thought of a lonely grave. She makes almost the same plea as the song: bury me not on the lone prairie.

> I became foolishly depressed, even morbid, before the baby was due. I felt that I was going to die, and I asked Mr. Alderson, if I did die, to take me in and bury me where there were water and flowers and trees, not one of these lonely hills.
>
> He said he didn't feel that way about death. He wanted to be buried where he was not carted around. He felt that when you died, it was just like throwing away an old coat. I knew he was right; yet I couldn't help shivering when I thought of those

> lonely graves out west, so far from friends. Every so often you come across one all by itself on a hillside, just covered by a heap of stones, with a fence around to keep the cattle from trampling it. They had always seemed terribly forlorn to me.[36]

Called by Luther the "first and the greatest of all cowboy songs"[37] and by Shoemaker "one of the few purely American folk songs,"[38] "O, Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie" is an adaptation of a mid-19th century song, "The Ocean Burial," according to Linscott written by the Reverend Edwin H. Chapin and published in the Southern Literary Messenger in 1839, and in 1850 set to music by George N. Allen.[39] Belden attributes the words to a Captain William H. Saunders, the music to Allen.[40] Despite the difference of opinion about the composer of the original words, there is none about the adaptation; all agree that is was "carried westward by some New England or Canadian youth, who went from punching logs to punching cattle"[41] and became "O, Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie."

Little change was needed to convert the song to fit a new

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36 Nannie T. Alderson and Helena Huntingdon Smith, A Bride Goes West (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, [c. 1942]), pp. 197-8.

37 LUTHER, p. 195.

38 SHOEMAKER, p. 201.

39 LINSCOTT, p. 245.

40 BELDEN, p. 388.

41 LINSCOTT, pp. 245-6.

situation.[42] The authorship of the western version is credited by Thorp to H. Clemons, Deadwood, Dakota, 1872,[43] and the song became a good deal more popular in its new form than it had ever been in its old form, although the earlier version persists in its own right.[44] The adaptation has eclipsed the earlier song, a not unfamiliar phenomenon in the field of folksong.[45]

Teddy Blue Abbott gives an indication of the popularity of the song in the Golden Era of the cattle industry in Montana:

> "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie" was another great song for awhile, but it ended up just like a lot of songs on the radio today; they sung it to death. It was a saying on the range that even the horses nickered it and the coyotes howled it; it got so they'd throw you in the creek if you sang it. I first heard it along about '81 or '82, and by '85 it was prohibited.[46]

The wide dissemination and great popularity of this song have led inevitably to many variations in detail. It does not seem to suffer either from discrepencies in detail or from shortening, since the central idea is really contained in the opening

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42 The first stanza of "The Ocean Burial":
"Oh, bury me not in the deep, deep sea."
These words came low and mournfully
From the pallid lips of a youth who lay
On his cabin couch at the close of day.
LINSCOTT, p. 246.

43 THORP, p. 62.

44 Variants of "The Ocean Burial" may be found in COX, JAFL LII, and LINSCOTT.

45 "It often happens that an earlier song is forgotten, while its parody, a happier combination of music and ideas, lives on in folk lore." Margaret Larkin, Singing Cowboy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), p. 21.

46 Abbott, op. cit., p. 261.

line, and the narrative that follows is only an amplification of it.

The Montana variant lacks only the mention of the girl who "has twined these locks and kissed this brow" to be as complete as the original "The Ocean Burial." The fifth stanza is developed somewhat differently, but is clearly enough derivative, as are all the other stanzas.

The other variants resemble or differ from each other in many minor ways, as might be expected. They all present about the same content, completely or incompletely. The idea expressed in stanza five of the Montana song, apparently a local addition, is not found in any of the other songs.

There have been no stampedes in Montana for many years now. The men who tend the herds on the ranches die in bed. But it was not always so, and in the preceding songs are preserved a part of the way of life of an earlier and more exciting day.[47]

WORK SONGS

Most dangerous occupations have songs about tragic deaths, and most occupations, dangerous or not, have songs about the work done and the hardships of the life.[48] The cowboy liked to sing about his work, often complaining about his hard lot. Among the tasks he had to do, rounding up the cattle for brand-

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47 Almost all dangerous occupations have their songs of death and dying. "Casey Jones," "The Jam on Jerry's Rock," and "Only a Miner," for instance, deal with deaths of a railroader, a lumberman, and a miner respectively.

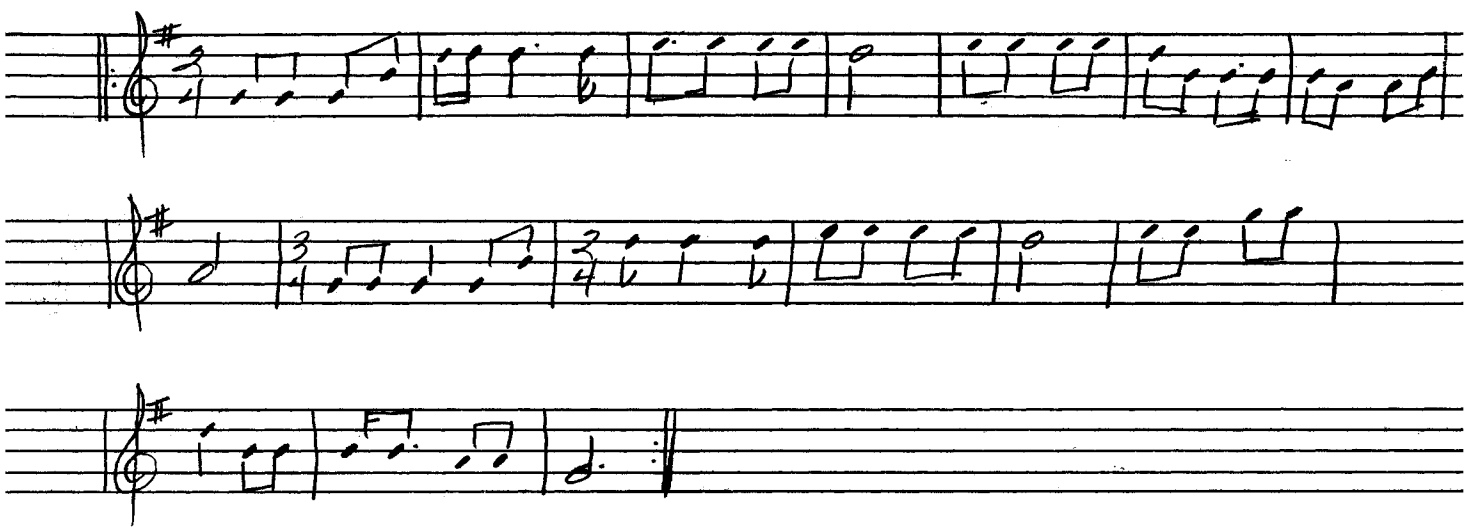
48 Cf. "The Lumberman's Life," "The Buffalo Hunters," "The Dreary Black Hills," and "The Little Old Sod Shanty on the Plains."

ing and shipment was the most important, though it was not the only one. He had plenty to do and plenty of songs about his burdens.[49] One of the jobs he had to do was to break for work the tough little mustangs that made up the remuda for the round-up. It was not always an easy job. Perhaps the most famous song that has grown out of this strife between cowboy and cow pony is "The Strawberry Roan," but there were other cayuses almost as tough as the roan. The first two songs in this section tell about a couple of them.

THE BRONC THAT WOULDN'T RUST

Recorded in Ashland, Montana, June 18, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

A variant may be found in LOMAX SONGS under the same title.



49 "The Cowboy," "The Old Cowboy," and "A Kansas Cowboy" are examples. Some of the songs in the previous section of this chapter would also fit into this category.

The Bronc That Wouldn't Bust

1. Busting broncos off and on since first I hit that trail,
Bet I savvy broncos from its nostrils down to tail.
Struck one on Powder River, tell you, boys, he was the first
One and only bronco yours truly did not burst.

2. Was an old no-count buckskin, wasn't worth two bits to keep,
Black stripe down his backbone and was wooly like a sheep,
Wasn't built to tread this earth, took naturally to the air,
Every time he went aloft, he tried to leave me there.

3. I ain't a-riding airplanes, no electric flying beast,
Ain't got rich relations that's waiting me back East.
Sold my chaps and saddle and my spurs can lay and rust;
At last I've met a bronco yours truly did not bust.

4. Went so high into the air he struck old Jordan's shore,
There we parted company and I came down alone.
Struck old terra firma, that bronco's heels hit free;
Brought along a little bunch of stars to dance in front of me.

5. I ain't a-riding, etc. (Repetition of stanza 3.)

This song is probably a relative newcomer to western folklore, since it mentions such things as airplanes and "electric flying beasts." Apparently never widespread, it may have appeared first in the poetry corner of some western newspaper. It has not yet gained a wide currency, despite the survival of the art of bronco busting in rodeos and elsewhere.

With one or two minor variations, including the repetition of one stanza, the Montana variant is like the Lomax text, except for the minor differences of dialect and diction inevitable in any song sung from memory.

The locale of the action of the song is somewhere on the Powder River, which rises in Wyoming and flows through large sections of both Wyoming and Montana, joining the Missouri near Terry, Montana. This does not mean, however, that the song originated in that area, since the Powder River is a well-known symbol

of the West.

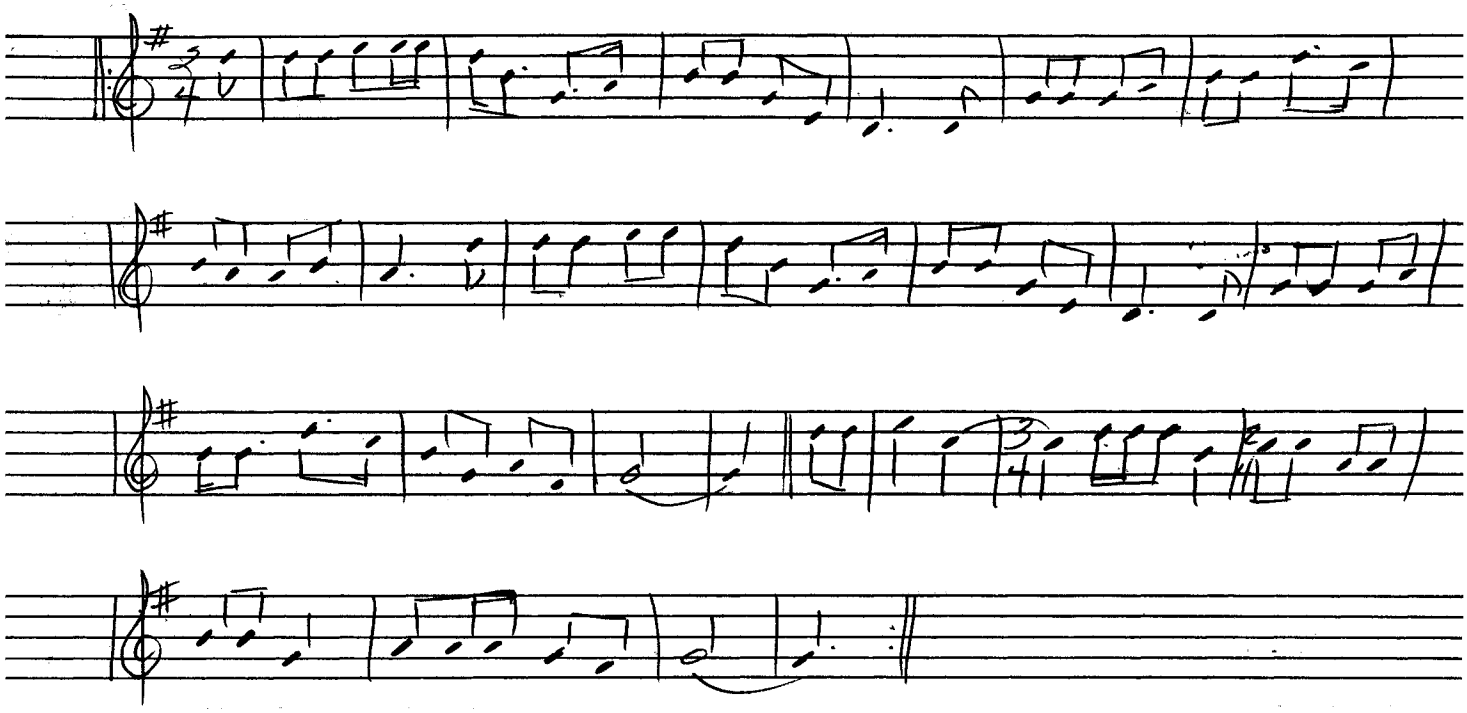
The singer has damned the bronc in this song with the worst invective he can think—he says he "was wooly like a sheep." To the early cattle rancher, there was no animal lower than a sheep, and no human being lower than the people who raised them. But in this song the bronc triumphs, just as later the sheep did. (Something more about that appears later in this chapter.)

The next song introduces another tough mustang.

SKY BALL PAINT

Recorded in Ashland, Montana, June 18, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

No variants were found.



Sky Ball Paint

1. Old Sky Ball Paint was a devil saint, and his eyes were fiery red,
   Many a man had tried this nag to ride, but all of them are dead.
   Ain't here to brag but I rode this nag till his blood did fairly boil,
   And I hit the ground and ate three pounds of good old western soil.

Re. Singing hi ho, whoopee ti yo, ride him high and down you go,
Sons of the western soil.

2. I swore by heck I'd break his neck for the jolt that he give my pride,
So I threw my noose on the old cayuse, and I once more took a ride.
He turned around and soon I found his head where his tail should be,
So, says I, perhaps he's shy or he just don't care for me.

Re. Singing hi ho, etc.

3. Down town one day I chanced to stray upon old Sheriff Jim,
With a whoop and a holler and a counterfeit dollar and I swapped that nag to him.
When old Jim plants the seat of his pants in Sky Ball's leather chair
I'll bet four bits when Sky Ball quits old Jim will not be there.

Re. Singing hi ho, etc.

This song may have only local currency; it is not to be found in any of the collections examined for this thesis. It may be a folksong and it may not, depending upon whether it is sung elsewhere, since by the definition set forth earlier in this paper, any song which has a life of its own through oral tradition is a folksong. Further investigation would be necessary to determine whether this song satisfies the condition. In form, it is rather more complicated than are most folksongs, utilizing an unusual and complicated internal rhyme, a fact suggesting literary origin. Folksong or not, it is a Montana song in the folk spirit.

A song more in the tradition of "The Zebra Dun" and "The Gol Dern Wheel" than in the tradition of "The Strawberry Roan," it emphasizes, as does "The Bronc That Wouldn't Dust," the attitude of the cowboy toward horses. Many bronc riders, according to popular mythology, would ride anything; it was a

blow to their ego when they couldn't stay aboard, as the men in these two songs did not. They liked, too, to get some one unsuspecting on the back of a rough horse, as the narrator in this song does to Sheriff Jim. It was crude fun, but understandable.

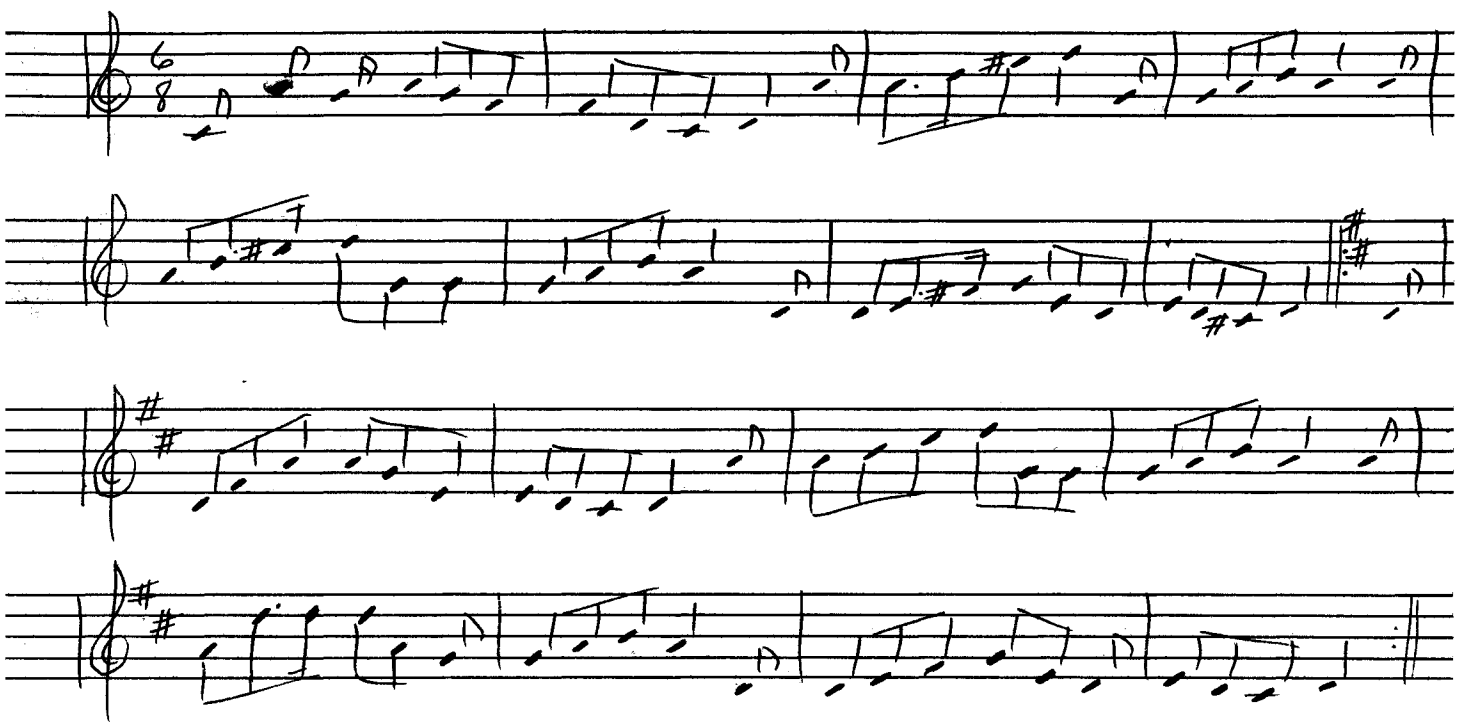
The refrain is rather effective in this song. It is perhaps reminiscent in part of the shouts of encouragement one cowboy gave another who was breaking a bronc.

The next song encompassing many of the phases of a cowboy's life ends by lamenting in the manner of "Old Time Cowboy" or "The Last Longhorn" the passing of a great tradition.

YELLOWSTONE FLAT

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 7, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

A variant may be found in LOMAX NEV under the title of "The Pecos Puncher."



Yellowstone Flat

1. Here's to the punchers on Yellowstone Flat,
Who wear the high heels, also the white hat,
Who'd work for the X's, also the HS,
But as for the CK we'd find her the best.

2. We used Collins saddles, new Miles City chaps,
With our cuffs made of leather, also the wide hats,
With our shirts made of buckskin, they're beaded all o'er,
With fringe to the elbow, the cowboys galore.

3. We come up the trail with the Texas rawhide.
There is not a bronco that we cannot ride.
With a quirt we can haze him and ne'er pull the horn,
For we are the twisters as sure as you're born.

4. With your foot to the stirrup and hand to the horn
To ride the wild broncos a cowboy is sworn.
Though he bellows and bawls you can hear him a mile,
His leaps is like lightning, we ride with a smile.

5. So it's ride your wild broncos, to the wagon you'll file.
In pursuit you will hear the cook holler "grub pile."
Then you roll out your bed on the ground cold and hard,
For soon you will have to stand a two-hour guard.

6. You're woke by a start, by a puncher's loud ring,
"Come alive, you wild cowboys, to the herd you must sing."
Well, the nights are so dark that you can't see at all,
And you ride by the sound of some lost maverick's bawl.

7. So early next morning on a circle you ride,
To round up the mavericks take down your rawhide.
We'll rope them and throw them as in olden day,
And on their left side we will brand a CK.

8. But the time for the punchers is now growing slim,
So down the old cow trail we'll soon split the wind.
We'll ride to the home ranch, we'll turn the broncs loose;
For the rope on the saddle there's no future use.

9. But as for bronc riding, I've rode broncs enough.
I'm a-going down East and like Wild Bill play tough.
My hair will grow long and I'll dance on the stage,
And I'll tell them out West I eat snakes and wild sage.

10. I'll soon bid adieu to the Yellowstone shore
Where the would-be cowpunchers are there by the score,
Where the steers o'er the trail no longer do come;
The days of the longhorners surely are done.

11. To all you kind cowboys I now bid adieu.
My song is now ended and I'm parting from you.
I'll hang up my outfit where it'll keep dry;
I'll be at the round-up in the sweet bye and bye.

The singer of this song offers the following information about it in a letter to the writer, dated 28 January, 1948:

> Now in regards to the song I sang, "Yellowstone Flats." That song was composed by H. A. Newman. He was a Texas cowboy, who came up here from Texas in 1900. He composed that song that winter while he was at the old XIT ranch eight miles north of Fallon, Montana. I learned that song from hearing it sung by the other cowboys who was working there at that time.

Lomax does not offer any theory about the origin of the song, and there seems no reason to doubt the word of the singer. Whether or not Newman ever wrote out the song, it managed to stay alive in oral tradition, where Roberts got it.

The Montana and the Lomax variants differ in minor details, but the general idea is the same in both. Each tells something of the cowboy's life, lamenting in the end that the old days are gone forever. Where the Montana variant mentions the CK and HS outfits, the other has the Long 3 and Eight-O. In such a circumstance, the singer in each case has probably included brands with which he himself was familiar. The mention of Miles City chaps adds even more local flavor to the version Roberts sings. The Montana variant is the superior song because of its continuity and more natural phrasing.

The Wild Bill alluded to in both variants is probably Buffalo Bill Cody, who is as responsible as anyone for the prevalent myth of the American cowboy. The attitude of the composer towards the new West is easily discernible in a

stanza appearing only in the Montana variant:

> I'll soon bid adieu to the Yellowstone shore
> Where the would-be cowpunchers are there by the score,
> Where the steers o'er the trail no longer do come;
> The days of the longhorners surely are done.

In some ways reminiscent of "The Cowboy's Farewell to Montana," discussed later in this paper, "Yellowstone Flat" has grown out of the passing of the West. The end of the great Texas trail drives marked the end of a way of life and of a glamorous tradition. Today we have the myth without the fact.

SOOTHING SONGS

> When on night herd it was necessary to sing to the cattle to keep them quiet. The sound of the boys' voices made the cattle know that their protectors were there guarding them and this gave them a sense of security. There were two songs that seemed to be favorites. The tunes were similar and all their tunes were monotonous and pitched to a certain key. I suppose they learned just the tune that was most soothing to the cattle. I know that their songs always made me drowsy and feel at peace with the world.[50]

Although some of the old time riders deny it vigorously, the custom of "singin' to 'em" was apparently prevalent on the early range. The cowboys on night herd sang to the cattle to keep them quiet and to reassure them against unknown dangers of the night. Charlie Russell mentions the practice,[51] and Teddy Blue Abbott cites some specific instances:

> One reason I believe there was so many songs

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50 Stuart, op. cit., II, 184.

51 Russell, op. cit., p. 201.

> about cowboys was the custom we had of singing to the cattle on night herd. The singing was supposed to soothe them and it did; I don't know why, unless it was that a sound they was used to would keep them from spooking at other noises. I know that if you wasn't singing any little sound in the night--it might be just a horse shaking himself--could make them leave the country; but if you were singing they wouldn't notice it. The two men on guard would circle around with their horses at a walk, if it was a clear night and the cattle was bedded down and quiet, and one man would sing a verse of a song, and his partner on the other side of the herd would sing another verse; and you'd go through a whole song that way, like "Sam Bass." I had a crackerjack of a partner in '79. I'd sing and he'd answer, and we'd keep it up like that for two hours. . . .
>
> After awhile you would run out of songs and start singing anything that came into your head. And that was how a thing like the Ogallaly song got started, that was not really a song, but was just made up as the trail went north by men singing on night guard, with a verse for every river on the trail. That song starts on the Nueces River, which is the furthest south of all the Texas rivers that flow into the Rio Grande, and from there it follows the trail clear on up to the Yellowstone. But when I first heard it it only went as far as Ogallaly on the South Platte, which is why I called it the Ogallaly song.[52]

This quotation from the book of an authentic old-time cowboy not only establishes the fact that singing to cattle was a common practice, but also shows the way in which folksongs are sometimes created. The Ogallaly song is the product of community effort, as many other folksongs are not, particularly the songs being considered in this paper.

Since the purpose of singing on the trail and on the bed-

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52 Abbott, op. cit., pp. 261-3.

ground was mainly to make noise, the choice of song made little difference. Any kind of soothing melody would do. Stuart mentions as two of the favorites of his riders "We go North in the Spring but will return in the Fall" [sic] and "We are bound to follow the Lone Star Trail" [sic].[53] The soothing songs, "shy on melody an' strong on noise,"[54] no matter what their subject matter or tune, served their purpose of reassuring the cattle.

One of the songs admirably suited to this purpose is this next one, a widely known favorite of the West.

WHOOPEE, TI YI YO, GIT ALONG LITTLE DOGIES

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, June 18, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

Variants and fragments of this song are printed in LOMAX, LOMAX REV, SANDBURG, and FOUND under the same title; in LUTHER, LAWKIN, (A and B), BOTKIN, and THORP as "Git Along Little Dogies;" in JAFL XXVIII as "Whoopee Ti Yi Yo;" in LOMAX SING as "Ram Along, You Little Dogies;" and in RANDOLPH as "Little Doogie." LOMAX BAL contains a composite version.

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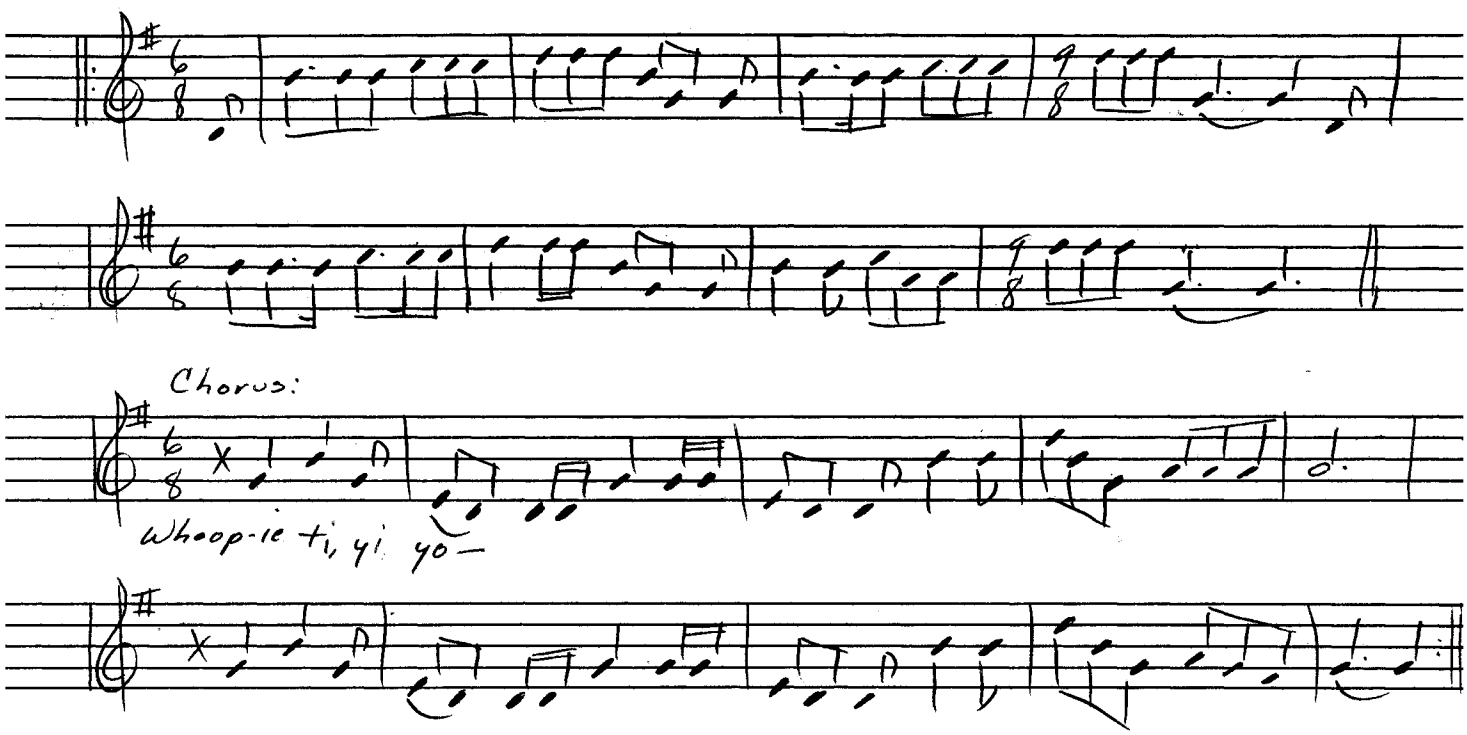
53 Stuart, op. cit., II, 191.

54 Russell, op. cit., p. 201.



Whoopee, Ti Yi Yo, Git Along Little Dogies

1. As I was out walking one morning for pleasure
I spied a cowpuncher a-riding along.
His hat was shoved back and his spurs was a-jingling
As he approached me a-singing this song:

Re. Whoopee, ti yi yo, git along little dogies,
It's your misfortune and none of my own.
Whoopee, ti yi yo, git along little dogies,
You know Wyoming will be your new home.

2. Now your mother's raised down in Texas
Where the gypsum weeds and the sand burrs grow.
We'll take you up to old Wyoming
. . . . .to prepare. . . . .

Re. Whoopee, etc.

3. Now it's early in the spring when we round up the dogies,
Mark them and brand them and bob off their tails.
We wrangle the horses, load up the chuck wagon,
And throw them dogies out on the long trail.

Re. Whoopee, etc.

4. Now some boys go up the trail for pleasure,
That's where they guessed most awfully wrong.
You have no idea the trouble it gives us
Keeping them dogies rolling along.

Re. Whoopee, etc.

5. Now you make soup for Uncle Sam's Injuns;
"Beef, heap beef," I hear them cry.
Git along, git along, git along, little dogies,
You'll be big steers bye and bye.

Re. Whoopee, etc.

Lomax suggests that this popular song of the range may be a derivation from an earlier song known in Canada and Vermont, "As I Went A-Walking One Fine Summer's Evening." There is indeed a similarity in form if not a close one in content. It begins

As I went a-walking one fine summer's evening,
To review the green fields as I strolled along,
I spied an old man in a sad lamentation,
He was rocking the cradle and this was his song.

"For it's 'Oh, no, baby, lie easy,
For indeed your own daddy shall never be known,'
For he's weeping and he's wailing and he's
rocking the cradle,
And pleasing the baby and the child not his own."[55]

Lomax's variant, "Run Along, You Little Dogies," shows a clearer resemblance to this song than any of the other variants, and may be a transitional step between the original song and its adaptation.

As I looked out of my window,
I saw a cowboy come riding along,
His hat was shoved back and his spurs kept a-jingling,
And as he drew near he was singing this song.

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55 LOMAX SINGS, pp. 241-2.

Hush-ia ciola, little baby, lie easy,
Who's your real father may never be known,
Oh, it's weeping, wailing, rocking the cradle
And tending a baby that's none of your own.[56]

Although the western adaptation is much the better known now, it is clearly derivative from the earlier song, at least in part.

The now popular version probably did not appear in its present form before 1880, and certainly not before the decade after the Civil War, when the practice of trailing Texas cattle north began. It was probably devised before 1900, when the practice stopped.

The stanzas and refrains are basically alike in all variants. The minor differences serve only to show that the song was a long time in the process of change, and that it went through many mouths before reaching the forms in which it now appears. Since it is not narrative, the content is not of primary importance anyway.

The Randolph fragment is a curious adaptation by a Missouri singer who was not familiar with cowboy lingo, and who confused "dogie"[57] with a girl's name. The "little dogie" of the other variants thus became "Little Doogie."[58] Apparently dogies are not familiar in Missouri.

The Montana variant contains nothing to indicate that the singer has tried to adapt it to the local situation. It does

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56 Ibid., pp, 243-4.

57 Bob Fletcher describes a dogie as "a little calf which has lost its mammy and whose daddy has run off with another cow." Robert H. Fletcher, Montana Highway Historical Markers (Helena, Montana: [c. 1938]), no. 20.

58 RANDOLPH, II, 174.

not even mention, as does the second refrain of "Run Along, You Little Dogies," the name of the state, Montana, but agrees with the rest of the variants that "Wyoming will be your new home."

After 1876, when the Indians were finally subdued, the government was obliged to feed them, and thus provided another market for the western steer. The fifth stanza of the Montana variant grew out of the practice of driving cattle to the reservations for sale to the government.[59]

This is only one of many soothing songs suitable for singing to cattle. Almost any of the songs in this and subsequent chapters could have been used, and perhaps were; this one was particularly appropriate. Singin' to em was a lot easier than turning a stampede, so it is not strange that the cowpuncher should have been a prairie troubadour as well as a rider and a roper. His versatility was a necessity.

HUMOROUS SONGS

The cowboy liked a good time as well as the next man, and enjoyed a joke at his own or someone else's expense. Getting a tenderfoot aboard a tough bronc was a favorite source of amusement.[60] The puncher could also laugh at his own misfortunes, as the following songs will indicate.

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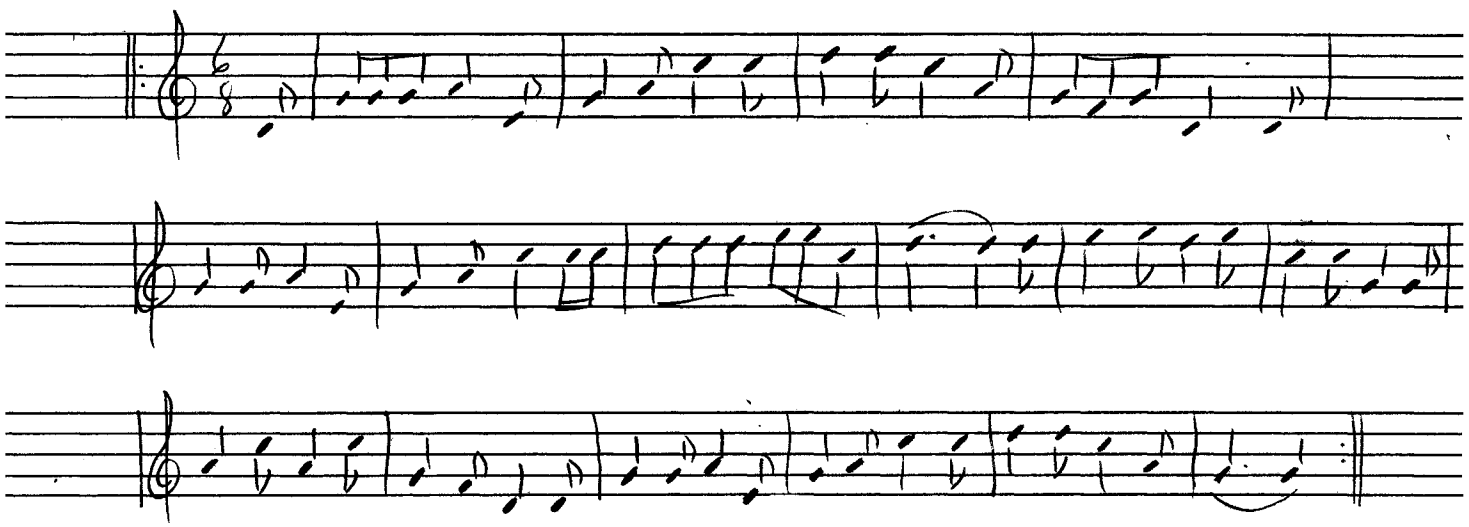
59 Edward Everett Dale, The Range Cattle Industry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), pp. 78-80. For a dramatic incident inspired by the passing of the buffalo and the Indians' consequent dependence on beef, see Howard, op. cit., pp. 27-9.

60 See "The Zebra Dun."

THE HORSE WRANGLER

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 9, 1948. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

Variants may be found in LOMAX, LOMAX REV, and POUND NEB under the same title; in THDEP as "The Tenderfoot;" in POUND as "Breaking in a Tenderfoot;" and in JAFL XXVI as "Punching Cows."



The Horse Wrangler

1. One morning in spring, 'twas just for fun,
Thought I'd see how cow punching was done.
The round-up yet had not begun
When I tackled of cattle the king.
He said, "My foreman's name is Brown,
I think you'll find him down in town,
And I think perhaps he'll take you down."
Thought I, that's just the thing.

2. Well, we started for the ranch next day;
Brown bored and augered me all the way.
He said cow punching was nothing but play
And it was no work at all.
For all you've got to do is ride,
It's just like drifting with the tide.
That son of a gun, oh, how he lied!
That gentleman had his gall.

3. Well, they saddled me up an old gray hack,
He had six setfasts[61] on his back.
They padded him up with a gunny sack,
He took my bed and all.
When I got on he quit the ground,
Went into the air and he whirled around;
When I come down I busted the ground,
And I got one terrible fall.

4. They picked me up and they packed me in,
They rubbed me down with an old stake pin,
Says that's the way we all begin.
"You're doing well," says Brown.
"Now in the morning if you don't die
Another honk we'll let you try,
For I think with practice you can fly."
Says I, "I'll back to town."

5. They put me charge of a cavyard
And told me not to work too hard,
Says all you've got to do is guard
Those horses from getting away.
I had a hundred and sixty head,
Sometimes I wished that I was dead,
For if one got away Brown's head got red,
And there was hell to pay.

6. Sometimes one across the prairie would take
As if she's running for a stake;
Then after him my horse'd break,
I had no time to play.
Sometimes I couldn't head him at all,
At other times my horse would fall,
And I'd go on like a cannon ball
Till the earth got in my way.

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61 Saddle sores. Ramon F. Adams, Western Words; A Dictionary of the Range, Cow Camp, and Trail (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), p. 140.

7. I've traveled up and I've traveled down,
I've lived in cities, I've lived in town,
I've traveled this wide world round and round,
And I've got this much to say:
Before you lead the cowboy's life
Go kiss your mother and kiss your wife
Then cut your throat with an old dull knife,
'Cause that's the quickest way.

At least two men have been given credit for writing this comic song of the range. Thorp attributes it to Yank Hitson, Denver, Colorado, 1889, and says that he himself got it at Phoenix, Arizona, in 1899.[62] Lomax says that the "original of this song was published in the Miles City (Montana) Stock Growers' Journal, February 3, 1894, under the pseudonym of R. J. Stovall. The author's real name is D. J. O'Malley. . . . The song grew to wide popularity, being well known in Texas."[63] The Stock Growers' Journal is not now available, so it is difficult to determine which of these two theories is right. Lomax's claim is at any rate better documented. Since the song has become community property, its origin is not important.

While there are, undoubtedly as a result of oral transmission, many minor differences between one text and another, in all cases the central idea is the same. In the Montana variant and in several others, the narrator says that after his fall he was rubbed down with "an old stake pin;" other variants report that it was a "rolling pin." Stake pins hav-

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62 THORP, p. 146

63 LOMAX REV, p. 119.

ing largely passed out with the coming of fences, it is not strange that a singer of the present day should insert into the song a word that seemed right and understandable to him, despite the fact that it might not be entirely logical.

The same is true of the use of the word "cavyard," corrupted a second time--it was originally a corruption of the Spanish caballada, meaning horse herd[64]--in the Pound variants: POUND, "cavvy herd;" and POUND NEB "calfy yard." Each of these versions is from Nebraska, perhaps too far away from Mexican influences to recognize readily words of Spanish origin. (Montana's close economic ties with Texas put her actually closer to Mexico than Nebraska.)

At any rate, neither of these changes materially affects the song. The central theme remains the same. The tenderfoot himself tells the sad tale of his initiation, and ends with what seems to him the best of advice: don't try to be a cowboy.

In this song a tenderfoot is the victim of the cowboy, but the tables are turned in the next.

THE GOL DERN WHEEL

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 10, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

This song may be found in THORP as "The Gol-Darned Wheel" and in LOMAX and LOMAX REV as "The God-Darned Wheel."

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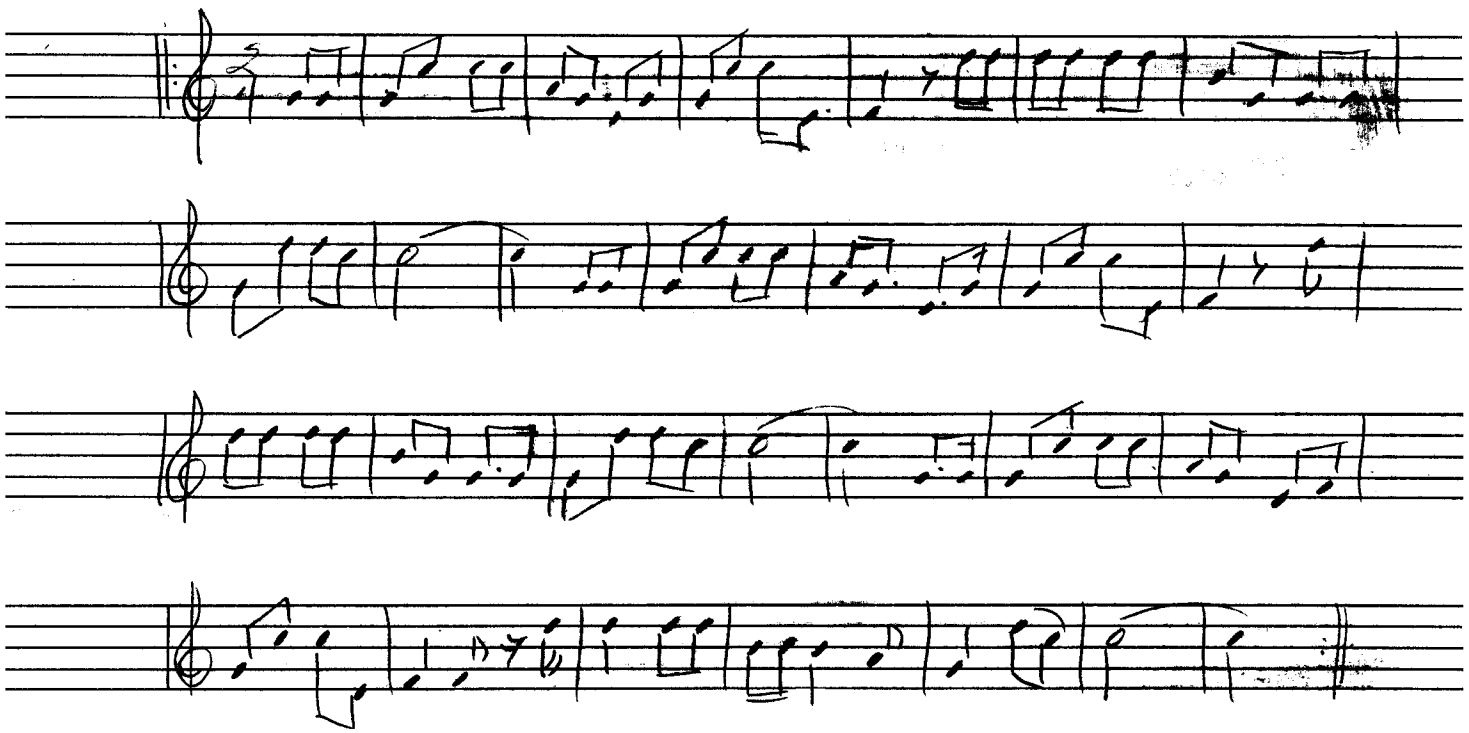
64 Adams, op. cit., pp. 26, 30.



The Gol Dern Wheel

1. I can ride the toughest bronco in this wild and wooly
West;
I can fan him, I can scratch him, let him do his level
best.

2. I can turn the toughest critter ever wore a Texas brand;
At Indian disagreements I play a leading hand.

3. But I know I met my master and it made the boys all
squeal;
They got me a-straddle of that gol dern wheel.

4. 'Twas at the Eagle ranch house upon the Brazos when
I met this dern convenience that set me in the sand.

5. Now an old tenderfoot had brought it and was wheeling
all the way
From the sunrise to the freedom out on the Santa Fe.

6. Tied up at the ranch house for to get outside a meal,
Never thinkin' that we'd meddle with that gol dern wheel.

7. Now Arizona Jim began it and he said to Jack McGill
There's fellows force their limit bragging on their riding
skill.

8. Just . . . . . their agreement, this same fellow that they meant
Was a very handy critter far as riding broncos went.

9. But this slam upon my talent made me hotter than a mink;
I swore that I would ride it for pastime or for chink.

10. So . . . . . such about
That has his idea shattered as they lead the varmint out.

11. Now they held him while I mounted and was ready for the go,
The shove they gave to start me, it wasn't very slow.

12. Then the hill looked mighty sloping from the ranch house to the . . . . .
Then . . . . .

13. Just breezing and a-banging first this way and that,
This darn convenience wobbled like the flying of a bat.

14. At last I woke up at the ranch house with the boys all gathered round;
The doctor sat beside me, there upon the ground.

15. Now, the doctor was a-sewing on the skin where I was ripped.
Old Arizona whispered, "Oh, kid, I guess you're whipped."

16. Well, I told him I was busted from sombrero down to heel;
He grinned and said, "Oh, kid, you'd ought to see that gol dern wheel!"

Although this song begins in somewhat the same spirit as "Wild Bronc Peeler,"[65] and other big-talk songs, it turns out to be something quite different indeed, perhaps because the adversary is not a bear or a steer or a horse or a man, but a machine, to the cowboy much more terrifying. Lomax suggests that the bicycle involved was one of the old models with the

---

65 "I've roped the wild horse and tied him down quick;
Did the saddle act and forked him plumb quick;
I've jerked off the hackamore, fetched a cowboy whoop,
And let him come alive for a bawl and root."
LOMAX REV, p. 85.

very tall front wheel;[66] if he is right, there was certainly reason for the downfall of the puncher.

The Golden Era of American bicycling was the 1890's, a fact which may help to date this song. It is not an adaptation of a previous song, probably, since it deals with cowboys specifically, even though the cowboy in this case is sadly out of his element. The song may very well have grown out of an actual incident.

The Montana variant is shorter and in some ways inferior to the others examined. It eliminates, for instance, much of the detail about the ride itself, certainly an important part of the song. Difficulty in transcribing the words had detracted from the Montana variant, too. However, the essentials are there: the challenge, the brag, the ride, the disastrous ending, and the punch line, "Oh, kid, you'd ought to see that gol dern wheel!" The weakness lies rather in the specific statement within the general framework. The rhythmic pattern varies from one stanza to the next, and the stanzas themselves are irregular. Some of the lines follow closely the seven-beat form familiar in the traditional ballads, while others contain from four to eight beats; yet the singer has sung them all in the same melodic pattern, changing the rhythm by adding or subtracting beats in some measures. Songs are easier to learn and to repeat if they are rhythmically regular, or if any irregularities are repeated consistently

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66 LOMAX REN, p. 269. Cf. "Broncho Versus Bicycle," LOMAX SONGS, pp. 14-18.

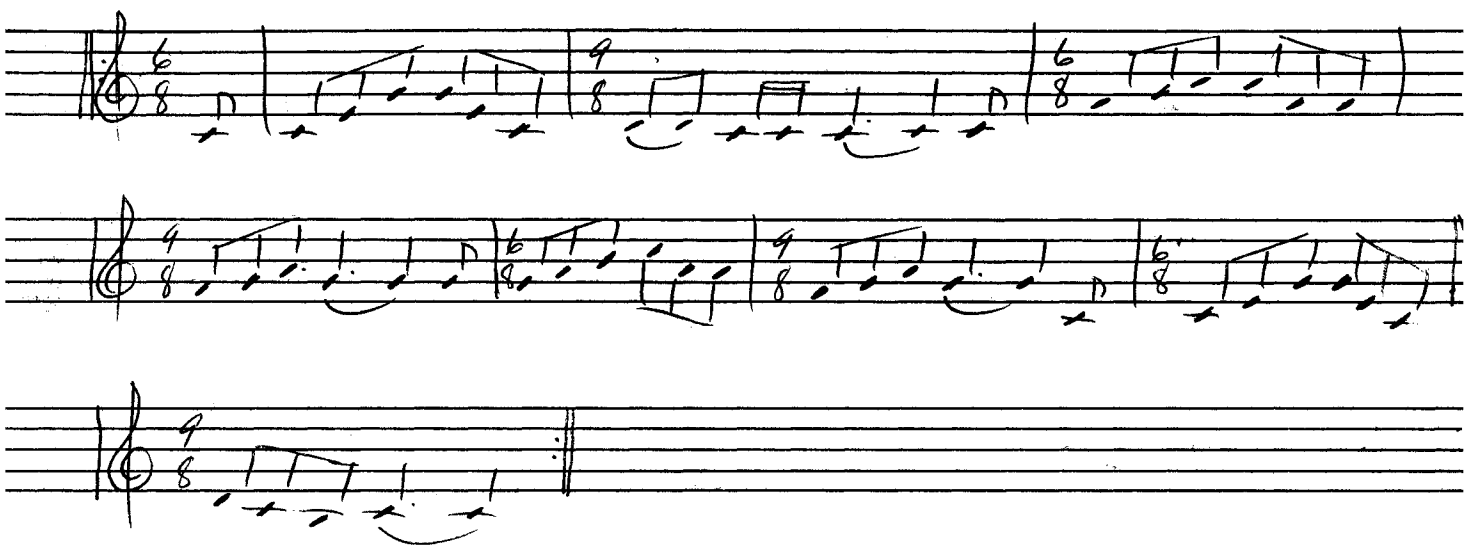
throughout. Most folksongs do follow a set pattern; this one seems to be weak because it does not. The other variants are more successful in this respect.

A third comic song involves, indirectly, a vehicle of a later day.

RICKY JIM

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 10, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

No variants were discovered.



Ricky Jim

1. I once knew a fellow, his name Ricky Jim.
   His figure was mostly all gauntly and slim.
   He couldn't bust broncos or ride herd by far,
   But man he could warble and strum a guitar.

2. In fact he was useless as sheepherders are,
And how he got by, it wasn't by far.
We stayed in the evening and set by the fire
While Ricky Jim warbled and strummed his guitar.

3. One night we went to a dance at the Czar.[67]
Ricky Jim was a-hankering to play his guiter.
Jim's horse got tangled up with a car,
Busted Jim's leg and plumb wrecked his guitar.

4. Now we all decided 'twas a terrible loss,
And we all chipped in from the cook to the boss,
Got forty dollars in a glass jelly jar
For to buy Ricky Jim a plumb brand new guitar.

5. But he double crossed us, the low dirty snake;
Just shows the advantage some fellows will take.
Here he comes home to the ranch from the Czar
With a piccolo instead of a Spanish guitar.

The singer of this song, Bob Quebbman, attributes it to a friend of his, Lawrence Hoffman, who lives in Montana. Whether it is known elsewhere is doubtful; it appears in none of the collections examined for this study. Since this is so, it is not yet truly a folksong according to the definition set up in the first chapter. It is presented as an example of the stuff out of which western folksongs are made. "Little Joe the Wrangler" and "When the Work's All Done This Fall" had beginnings no more auspicious, and have certainly become a part of folklore. "Ricky Jim" suffers from having come on the scene late, too late, perhaps, to develop and spread as the two songs mentioned did. It was "born thirty years too late."

This comparatively new song--Jim's horse got tangled up with a car, not a bicycle or another horse--perpetuates the

---

67 Probably a combination bar and dance hall.

myth of the antagonism between the cowman and the sheepman, mentioned already in the discussion of "The Bronc That Wouldn't Bust."

The cattlemen did not own the land upon which they grazed their cattle, but they resented bitterly any encroachment upon what they considered their range rights, especially by sheepmen, since according to tradition, cattle would not graze upon pasture previously used by sheep. However, they were not able to prevent the growth of the sheep industry. In 1870 there were 2000 head of sheep in Montana, in 1884 there were 500,000, in 1893 there were 2,250,000, and in 1903 there were 3,500,000.[68] In a few cases ranchers kept both cattle and sheep, but they were the exceptions, and not popular with most cattle ranchers, who considered sheepmen worse than farmers. Howard tells the following story about the conflict between the rancher and the sheepherder:

> A Montana cattleman, riding his range one day, found a sheepherder camped upon it, with his flock. He ordered the herder to get off. Returning the next day, he found the lamb-licker still there. Again he demanded that the interloper quit his range.
>
> The herder looked up calmly at the mounted stockman. "You own it, pardner?" he asked.
>
> The cattleman admitted that he didn't. "But it's my range," he retorted, "and I want you off!"
>
> The herder got up slowly, drawing a Winchester rifle from the ground as he did so.
>
> "Listen, friend," he said quietly, "I just got out of prison after shooting one sonofabitch like you, and I'd just as soon go back for shooting another."
>
> The cattleman rode home. . . .[69]

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68 Howard, op. cit., p. 112. See also Dale, op. cit., p. 112.

69 Ibid., pp. 112-3.

The sheepmen did not scare easily, and soon took a place beside the cattlemen as large operators. Though there is no real ill feeling between the two any longer, largely because the economic conflict is no longer present, the myth is still preserved in stories and songs, of which "Ricky Jim" is only a minor example.

The cowboys had many humorous songs with which they cheered themselves when other entertainment was not available. The foregoing are three found in one part of Montana.

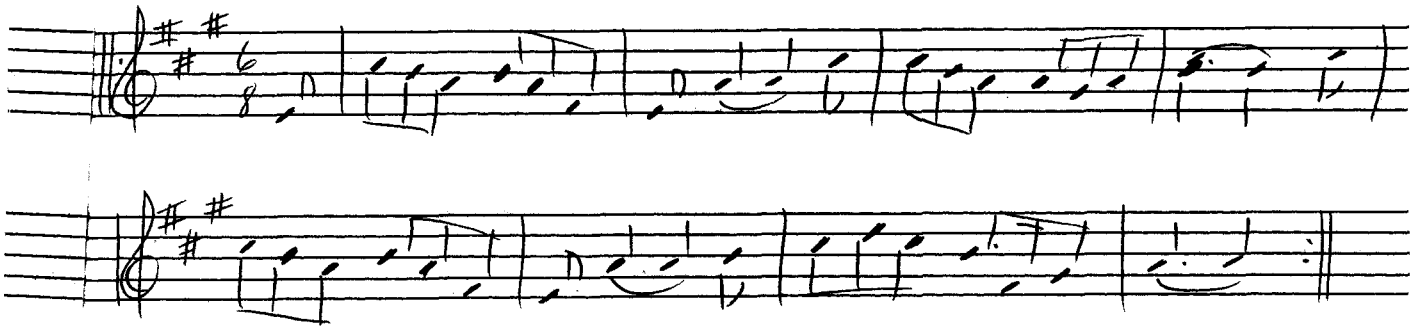
MISCELLANEOUS COWBOY SONGS

Although the following songs do not fit readily into the categories previously discussed, they are certainly cowboy songs, and belong in this chapter.

A COWBOY'S FAREWELL TO MONTANA

Recorded in Ashland, Montana, June 28, 1947. Sung by Mrs. Clifford Campbell.

A variant is printed in LOMAX REV as "The Dry-Landers."



A Cowboy's Farewell to Montana

1. A cowboy lay out on the prairie.
He said it was all up with him.
He had two quarts of good whiskey
And nearly a full quart of gin.

2. His saddle he used for a pillow,
His blanket he used for a bed,
And when he awoke from his slumbers
These words to himself he then said.

3. Farewell, dear old Montana country,
The fairest green spot on God's earth,
I'm leaving this grand state forever,
Going far from the land of my birth.

4. Farewell to you, scissor-bill[70] farmers,
You're driving me far from my home.
You've homesteaded all of the country
Where the slick ears and mavericks roam.

5. No more we'll be able to rustle
As in the old days gone by.
Then he took a big shot from his bottle
Of good old ninety-nine rye.

6. I've lived all my life in the saddle.
All I know is to rope an old cow.
I never could work on a sheep ranch.
And I'll be damned if I'll follow a plow.

7. There's no other job I can handle,
There's no other life I'd enjoy
Away from the spurs and the saddle,
A wild and a wooly cowboy.

8. Here's luck to you, all you dry landers.
You've settled this country at last,
And I hope you'll succeed in the future
Like the cowboys have done in the past.

The variants printed by Lomax and sung by Mrs. Campbell are essentially the same, with a few differences in arrangement, except for the introduction by Mrs. Campbell of a stanza about Montana (stanza 3), and the inclusion by Lomax of a last stanza

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70 One who does not do his work well. Adams, op. cit., p. 139.

which does not appear in the Montana variant. The song is probably an adaptation of "The Cowboy's Dream," though without the refrain, sung to the familiar tune of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean."

Like "Yellowstone Flat," this song laments the passing of the old West, and in addition reflects the attitude of the cattleman toward the homesteaders who were rapidly replacing him, and toward the sheepmen, for whom he bore no love.

> I never could work on a sheep ranch,
> And I'll be damned if I'll follow a plow.

The cowboy would rather leave his old range than become a farmer or a sheepherder, according to this song. Actually, many cowboys did become farmers, but the general sentiment among them was against such a step.

The farmer who had never been a cowboy, although he had been gradually moving west, did not really threaten the Montana rancher until after the turn of the century. When he did come, he put an end to the open range and contributed more than anyone else to the passing of the frontier. By 1910 he was well established; in that year homesteaders had filed on 4,750,000 acres of land in the state.[71] Although the fence and the plow did not end the cattle industry, they radically changed its nature.

The narrator in the Montana variant, despite his lament for the end of his way of life, does not seem resentful of the encroaching farmer:

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71 Howard, op. cit., p. 168.

And I hope you'll succeed in the future
Like the cowboys have done in the past.

The concluding lines of the Lomax variant strike quite a different tone, one of resentment against the farmer, and warn him about his conduct in the future:

You have come to this wonderful country, yes, you fenced in the range from our herds,
We have fed you and drug in your fireweed, but the word 'Thanks' has never been heard.

Then here too let me again warn you, don't steal from the ranches close by,
Or some day you'll wake up in heaven and not on your homestead close by.
Then too if you wish for to prosper, don't sleep in your homestead all day,
But hit to your toil in the mornin' or you'll soon be driftin' away.[72]

Both versions agree that the cowboy, even when faced with the fact that farming was in the West to stay, could not bear to change his mode of living.

There's no other job I can handle,
There's no other life I'd enjoy
Away from the spurs and the saddle,
A wild and a wooly cowboy.

The next song is a lament of a different kind.

I'VE GOT NO USE FOR THE WOMEN

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, June 30, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

The song is printed in LOMAX REV as "Bury Me Out on the Prairie."

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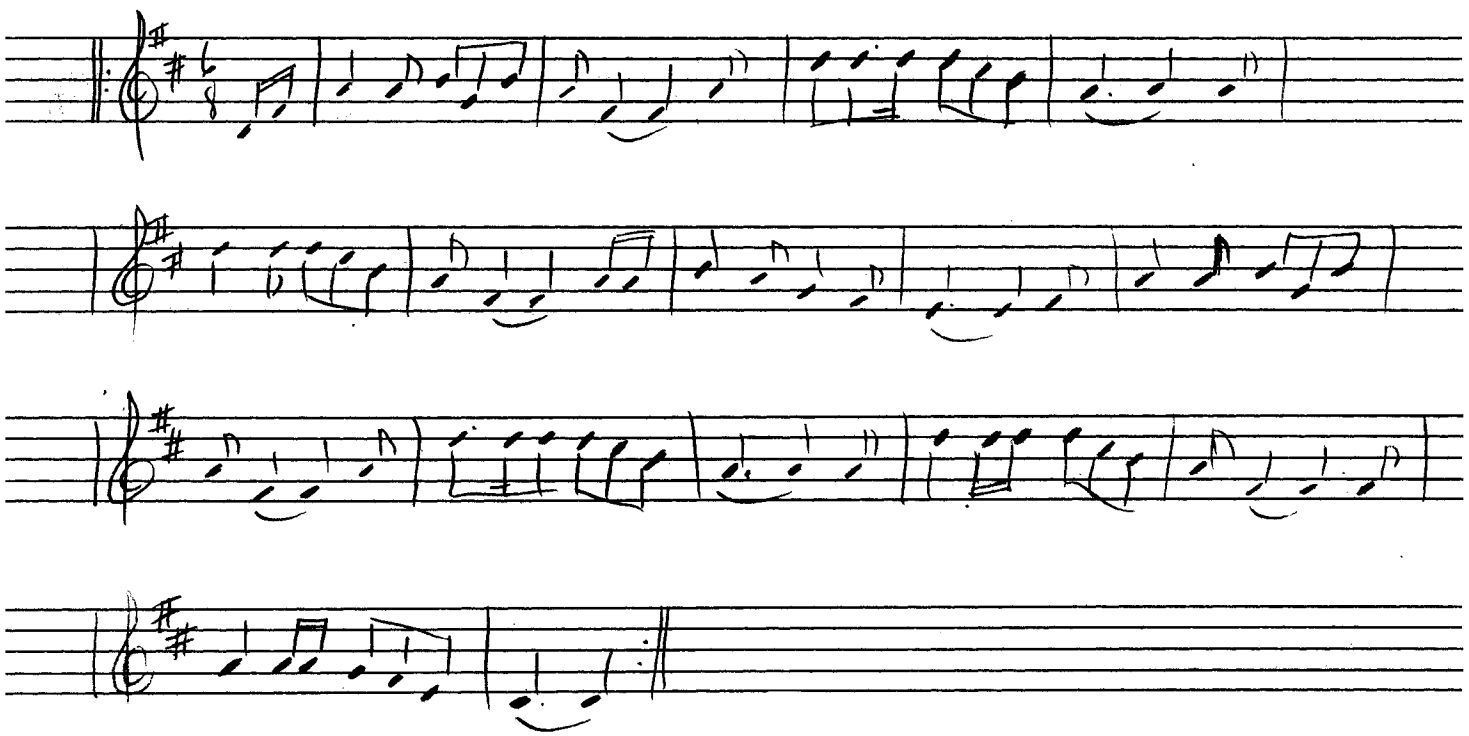
72 LOMAX REV, p. 307.



I've Got No Use for the Women

1. Oh, I've got no use for the women.
A true one may never be found.
They'll use a man for his money;
When it's gone they'll turn him down.
They're all alike at the bottom,
They're selfish and grasping for all,
They'll stay like a pal if you're winning,
Then laugh at your face at your fall.

2. My pal was a true young puncher,
He was honest and upright and square,
But he turned to a gunman and a gambler,
And a woman sent him there.
Quicker and surer his gunplays
Till the heart in his body lay dead.
When a cowboy insulted her picture
Then he filled him full of lead.

3. Well, it's all night long they trailed him
Through mesquite and wild chaparral,
And I couldn't but think of the woman
When I saw him pitch and fall.
For if she'd been the pal that she should of
They might have been raising a son
Instead of out there on the prairie
To die by the ranger's gun.

4. But the cold sting of death didn't trouble,
His chances of life were too slim,
So where they were leaving his body
Was all that worried him.
So he lifted himself on his elbow,
While the blood from his wound flowed red.
He gazed on those stood beside him,
Then he whispered to them and said:

5. "Just bury me out on the prairie,
Where the coyotes may howl o'er my grave,
Yes, bury me out on the prairie,
Out there may my bones be laid.
Just wrap me up in my blanket,
Oh, bury me deep 'neath the ground.
Cover me over with boulders,
With granite both huge and round."

6. So we buried him out on the prairie,
And the coyotes still howled o'er his grave,
But his heart is now a-resting
From the unkind cut she gave.
And many a similar puncher
As he rides by that pile of stones
May recall some similar woman,
And envy his mouldering bones.

The Lomax and Montana variants are remarkably similar, differing only in minor matters of diction. Except for the mention in Lomax of the "girl named Lou" as the downfall of the young puncher, the details are the same.

The "true young puncher" mentioned in this song is not the first man in folklore to be the victim of a woman's duplicity. Another young man of an earlier day was done in by a girl named Barbara Allen; the next chapter contains a song about another man wronged. Unfaithful lovers are almost as often preserved in folksong as the faithful ones, from "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard" to "Frankie and Johnnie."

In just what way "a girl named Lou" was responsible for the death of the cowboy, the stanzas of "I've Got No Use for the Women" do not say. They only indicate that she was not the pal

that she should have been. The rest of the song deals not with the guilt of the girl, but with the death and dying plea of the man. The perfidious girl seems to act only as a convenient device for bringing about the death of the man, which is the primary interest in the song. He might just as well have died from a fall as far as most of the song is concerned. Unlike the dying cowboy in "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie," this one wants to be buried "out on the prairie," in order that the coyotes may howl over his grave, the exact fate the other one dreaded. This fact suggests that the song is of a later date than "Bury Me Out on the Long Prairie;" the parody seems conscious rather than accidental. At any rate, both of these cowboys, he who did not want to be buried on the prairie and he who did, ended, like Utah Carroll, in a narrow grave, "just six by three," way out West on the lone prairie.

Whether all of these songs can properly be termed folksongs remains for time to tell. If in the case of some they begin to be sung and to be handed down in oral tradition, and if in the case of others they continue to be sung and handed down in oral tradition, they may become accepted as genuine folksongs. This paper is not so much concerned with the justification for their classification as it is with discussing them, with recording them, and with bringing them to the attention of interested people who want to know something of the state's store of cowboy songs. For whatever they are worth, all these songs have been sung in Montana, some of them for a long time. They reflect a singular way of life, a way of life now gone in reality, but alive as long as its myth exists. These songs contribute to that myth.

III

OUTLAW AND RANGER

Any frontier is likely to have its lawless element, and America's West was no exception. It had a number of rough characters, including such unsavory but famous gentlemen as Jesse James, Tom Horn, the Dalton boys, and Kid Curry. Often the victims of circumstance or fugitives from the more settled parts of the country, these men defied both published law where there was any and custom and modes of decent behavior where there was not. On the frontier, where everyone could do almost as he pleased just by striking out on his own, establishing and maintaining law were difficult tasks. Conditions were almost ideal for bandits, and there was no dearth of them.

But there were at the same time on the frontier men who strove to establish laws and to punish those who broke them. Some of these men banded together as Vigilante groups[1] to do for themselves and their communities what government agencies did not do. In some communities legal bodies were organized to protect the property of citizens from the outlaw as well as from the Indian. Such a group was the famed Texas Rangers.

Around both of these categories of men, outlaws and those who sought to discipline them, has grown up a body of legendary

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1 Two accounts of the Vigilantes in Montana can be found in Hoffman Birney, Vigilantes (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Co., [c. 1929]) and Nathaniel Pitt Langford, Vigilante Days and Ways, Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1927).

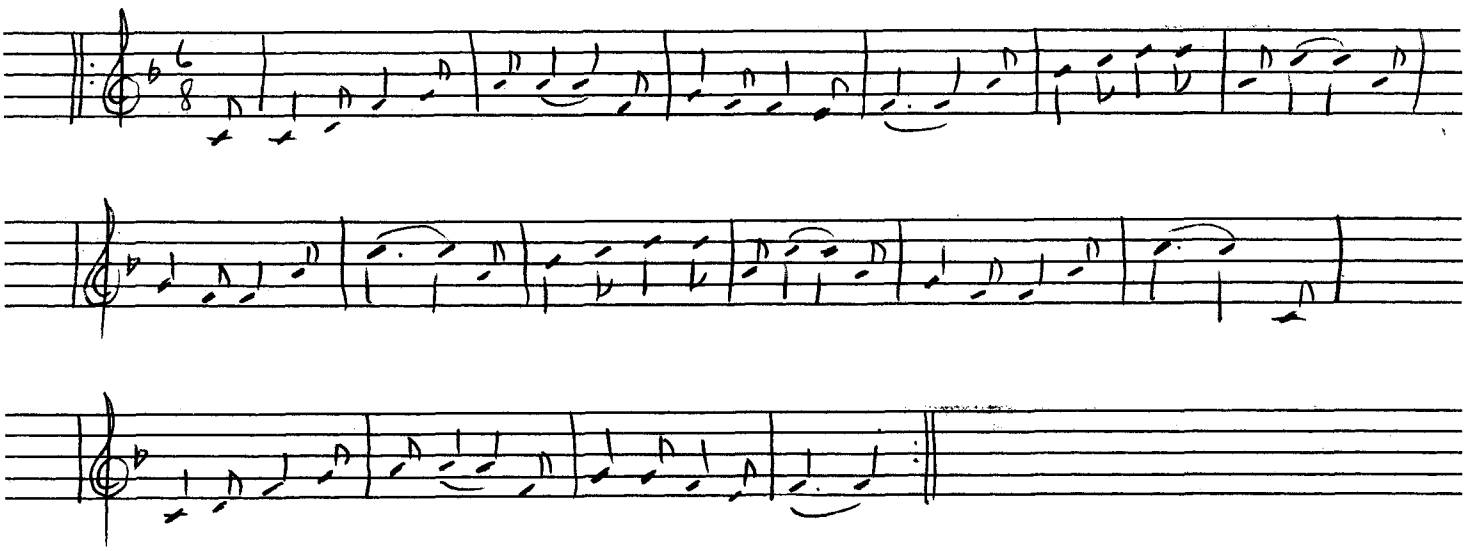
material, most of it untrue and highly sentimental. Jesse James and Billy the Kid, to mention but two of the badmen of the West, have achieved the status of modern Robin Hoods. They are better remembered for the excitement they brought and the good deeds they are alleged to have done than for the many genuine crimes they committed. The man who shot Jesse, Robert Ford, is usually referred to as a "dirty little coward." Ford gained an unholy fame when he betrayed poor Jesse, a public benefactor who robbed the rich and gave to the poor. On the other hand, Roy Bean, the Law West of the Pecos, and Wild Bill Hickock, both fast men with the six-shooter, were on the side of the law at least part of the time, and have become as famous for their exploits as the outlaws did for theirs. Either a bad man or a good man could become a hero in western mythology, just so long as he could shoot straight.

This chapter is devoted to two songs which help perpetuate myths, one of a badman, one of a group of men organized to combat them, the Texas Rangers. Although neither of these songs is peculiar to Montana, they have both been found in the state.

SAM BASS

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 9, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

Variants or fragments may be found in BOTKIN, FINGER, LUTHER, BELDEN, LARKIN, SANDBURG, THORP, LOMAX, and POUND under the same title, in RANDOLPH (A) as "Young Sam Bass," and in RANDOLPH (B) with no title.



Sam Bass

1. Sam Bass from Indiana, that was his native home,
But at the age of eighteen young Sam began to roam.
He first came down to Texas, a cowboy for to be,
A kinder hearted fellow you hardly ever see.

2. Sam used to deal in race stock, one called the Denton mare,
He matched her in scrub races and carried her to the fair;
She always coined the money, Sam spent her fast and free,
For he always drank good whiskey wherever he might be.

3. He left the Collins ranch in the merry month of May,
With a herd of long-horned cattle, the Black Hills for to see;
Sold out in Custer City and they all got on a spree.
A wilder bunch of cowboys you hardly ever see.

4. Sam had four bold companions, four bold and daring lads,
There's Richardson and Jackson, Joe Collins and Old Dad;
Four more bold and daring cowboys the Rangers never knew.
They whipped the Texas Rangers and ran the boys in blue.

5. Sam had another companion called Arkansas for short.
He was killed by a Texas Ranger by the name of Thomas Floyd.
Now, Tom's a big six footer and you think he's very fly, (?),
But I can give you his racket--he's a deadbeat on the sly.

6. While on their way to Texas, they robbed the UP train.
They then split up in couples and started off again.
Joe Collins and his partner was overtaken soon,
And with their gold and greenbacks they had to meet
their doom.

7. Sam made it back to Texas all right side up with care,
Rode into the town of Denton where all his friends were
there;
Sam's life was short in Texas, four robberies he did do.
He robbed all the passengers and all the express cars too.

8. Jim Murphy was arrested and soon released on bail.
He jumped his bond at Tyler, then took a train to Terrell,
But Major Jones had posted Jim and that was all a stall.
'Twas only a plan to capture Sam before the coming fall.

9. Sam met his fate at Round Rock July the twenty-first.
They pierced his side with rifle balls and emptied out
his purse,
And now poor Sam is sleeping within the colored clay,
While Jackson's in the bushes, he's trying to get away.

10. Jim Murphy borrowed Sam's good gold and didn't want to pay;
The only way he saw to win was to give poor Sam away,
So he sold out on Bass and Barnes and left their friends
to mourn,
But what a scorching Jim will get when Gabriel blows his
horn.

This widely circulated song about the outlaw "second in popular fame only to Jesse James"[2] was written, according to N. Howard Thorp, by John Denton of Gainsville, Texas, in 1879,[3] the year after Sam's death. Thorp does not say whether Denton printed it or simply sang it and started it on its way by that means. At any rate, it has since traveled considerably about the country, and perhaps has lost its original author to a stronger force, oral tradition.

Sam Bass was a real person, just as Jesse James was. As the song indicates, he was born in Indiana, he did rob the UP

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2 BELDEN, p. 399.

3 THORP, p. 135.

train, and he did die on July 21, 1878, at Round Rock, Texas.[4] The rest of the details contained in the variants of the songs differ from one another, as might be expected. Sam's age when leaving home, for instance, is given in the Montana variant as eighteen, in most of the others as seventeen. Where most of the other variants credit Sam with only three robberies, the Montana song says four. In some cases, the names of Sam's companions do not agree, and the MP is named at least once in place of the UP. All of these are only minor discrepancies, to be expected in songs handed down orally, but they indicate that such songs are not the best way to preserve historical facts. The Sam Bass treated so sympathetically by the song was actually a thoroughly despicable man, if judged objectively by his acts, yet he has become an American hero of sorts, credited with all the motives of a Robin Hood.[5] Teddy Blue Abbott contributes to the legend:

> Sam Bass was my father's wagon boss. He wasn't an outlaw then--just a nice, quiet young fellow. He was with us most of the winter, but in March, '72, after the winter broke, he rode into Lincoln, where he bought a new rope, having broke his, pulling bogged cattle. In order to stretch it he was roping posts and making his horse pull it so as to get the kinks out. About that time a man walked down the board sidewalk, which was about three feet above the street. Sam roped him for a joke and pulled the rope too hard, and the old fellow stumbled and kind of cut his face in the gravel. He got up hopping mad and went for the sheriff--and Sam lit out for the ranch and got his money and pulled out for Texas. The sheriff was one hour too late.
>
> None of us ever saw Sam Bass again. He was a nice fellow, always very kind to me, and different from most

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4 For an account of Sam's life and death, see Charles A. Siringo, Riata and Spurs (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, [c. 1927]), pp. 181-188. A picture of Sam Bass faces p. 182.

5 BOTKIN, pp. 114-18 quotes part of the Sam Bass legend from Wayne Gard, Sam Bass (New York: Houghton Mifflin, [c. 1936]).

> of the wild devils who came up the trail in the seventies. He did not get to drinking and raising hell. He never would have been an outlaw, only through loyalty to his boss Joe Collins, who had blowed in his whole herd in Deadwood and had to have money to face and pay his friends in Texas; so Sam helped him rob that U. P. train.[6]

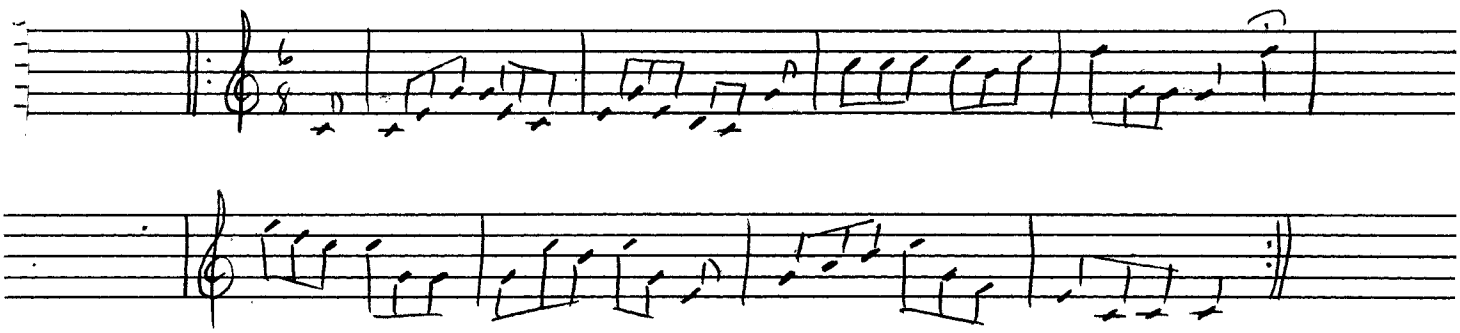
From roping an old man in fun to robbing trains in earnest is a long step, but the legend of Sam Bass includes both incidents, with apparently little discrimination between the seriousness of the two. Jim Murphy, Sam's betrayer, and not "poor" Sam, will get a scorching "when Gabriel blows his horn."

Although the song does not say so specifically, it was the Texas Rangers who put an end to Sam Bass, just as they put an end to many another law breaker on the Texas frontier.[7] The next song presents their side of the picture.

THE RANGER

Recorded at the Ft. Howes Ranger Station, near Ashland, Montana, June 27, 1947. Sung by Charlie Thex.

Variants of this song are printed in LOMAX REV as "The Disheartened Ranger" and in RANDOLPH as "Come List to a Ranger."



6 E. C. Abbott and Helena Huntingdon Smith, We Pointed Them North (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., c. 1939), pp. 10-11.

7 For the complete story of the Ranger, see Walter Prescott Webb, The Texas Ranger: A Century of Frontier Defense (New York: Houghton Mifflin, c. 1935).

The Ranger

1. Come listen to a ranger, you kind-hearted stranger,
A song though a sad one you're welcome to hear.
We kept the Comanches away from their ranches
And followed them far west over this Texas frontier.

2. We're weary of routing, of traveling and scouting,
Of following them over those prairies and woods.
No rest for a sinner, no breakfast, no dinner,
No sleep or a . . . . . bed in the mud.

3. No corn or potatoes, no beets, no tomatoes,
Beef jerk's as dry as the sole of your shoe.
All day without drinking, all night without winking,
I'll tell you, kind stranger, this never will do.

4. Those great alligators, the state legislators,
They're puffing and blowing two thirds of the time,
So you can win you some rations or steal 'em or snatch 'em,
You can't put in your pocket the tenth of a dime.

5. They won't reward us, they don't regard us,
Hungry and ragged with holes in our coats,
But elections are coming and then they'll be drumming
And praising our value to purchase our votes.

6. (Since?) glory and raiments and victuals and payments,
No longer I'll fight on this Texas frontier,
So it's look to your ranches and mind the Comanches
Or surely they'll scalp you in less than one year.

7. Although it may grieve you this ranger must leave you
Exposed to the arrow and knife of the foe,
So it's drive your own cattle and fight your own battle,
For it's home to the states I'm determined to go.

8. Where laws are more equal and churches more steeple,
States have more people and ladies more kind,
Where work is rewarded and worth isn't guarded,
And pumpkins are plenty and potatoes grow fine.

When he sang this song for the recording, Charlie Thex claimed that he had written it himself, and that he was once a member of the now fabulous Texas Rangers. If he did indeed write it, Randolph's remarks about its origin are erroneous: "According to J. Evetts Halley. . . two rangers, Tom Pollard and Alec McClosky, composed this 'bit of doggerel' during Civil

War times." At any rate, it "doubtless goes back to print."[8] Whoever the author is, the song has now become folklore, a part of the legend of one of the West's most famous fighting outfits.

One story told whenever Rangers are mentioned illustrates the myth that has grown up around the organization:

> There hain't nothing what a ranger won't tackle. Well, when Fort Worth first started up there was some kind of trouble and pretty much of a riot. So they wired down to headquarters for rangers to keep order. What did they do but send this same Floyd [mentioned in "Sam Bass"]. The mayor and the people, all het up about the trouble, was down at the depot, when this Floyd gets off. The mayor, he says, we sent for rangers. All right, says Floyd, here I am. Well, hain't there no more than one of you, asked the mayor. Why? asks Floyd. Is there more than one riot?[9]

Nowhere in the West was there a more respected force than the Rangers. Organized originally to protect the property and lives of white settlers in the Republic of Texas from Indians, they had become an institution by 1840, and have been prominent ever since in the history of Texas and the Southwest.[10] When the Indian menace was no longer pressing, the organization became a general law enforcement body, ending the criminal activities of such bandits as Sam Bass and others less well known.

However, this song, "The Ranger," is not about the daring deeds performed by the Rangers, but rather about one particular Ranger who doesn't like his lot, and intends to give up his

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8 RANDOLPH, II, 178.

9 BOTKIN, p. 121.

10 Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Ginn and Co., [c. 1931]), p. 167.

place to go back to the "states." He complains of the work and of the pay, both of which may have been legitimate protests. Certainly life on the frontier was hard enough under the best of circumstances, circumstances which the Ranger was not likely to encounter while "routing and traveling and scouting." And he was probably not over-paid. One cannot blame him for giving up.

The Montana and Lomax variants of the song are substantially the same, the Randolph version a muddled fragment. One stanza, about wives and daughters--"No more we'll defend them, to God we'll commend them"--appears in Lomax but not in the Montana song. Such minor discrepancies as "haggard" for "ragged" are to be expected as a result of oral transmission and are not significant.

Outlaw and officer—these are two of the fabulous characters of the West, second in popularity only to the cowboy. While their actual deeds may be forgotten, songs like "Sam Bass" and "The Ranger" serve to keep alive the legends that grew up around them.

IV

OTHER SONGS

Cowboys, outlaws, and rangers, although they were the favorites, were not the only subjects used in folksongs of the West. The eleven songs from the Montana collection which make up this chapter, for instance, have nothing to do with cowboys. For the most part, they do not deal with the West, and are probably importations from other parts of the country. While all of these songs have been found <u>in</u> the West, they are not necessarily <u>of</u> the West, with a couple of notable exceptions. They are simply American folksongs that have found their way to Montana.

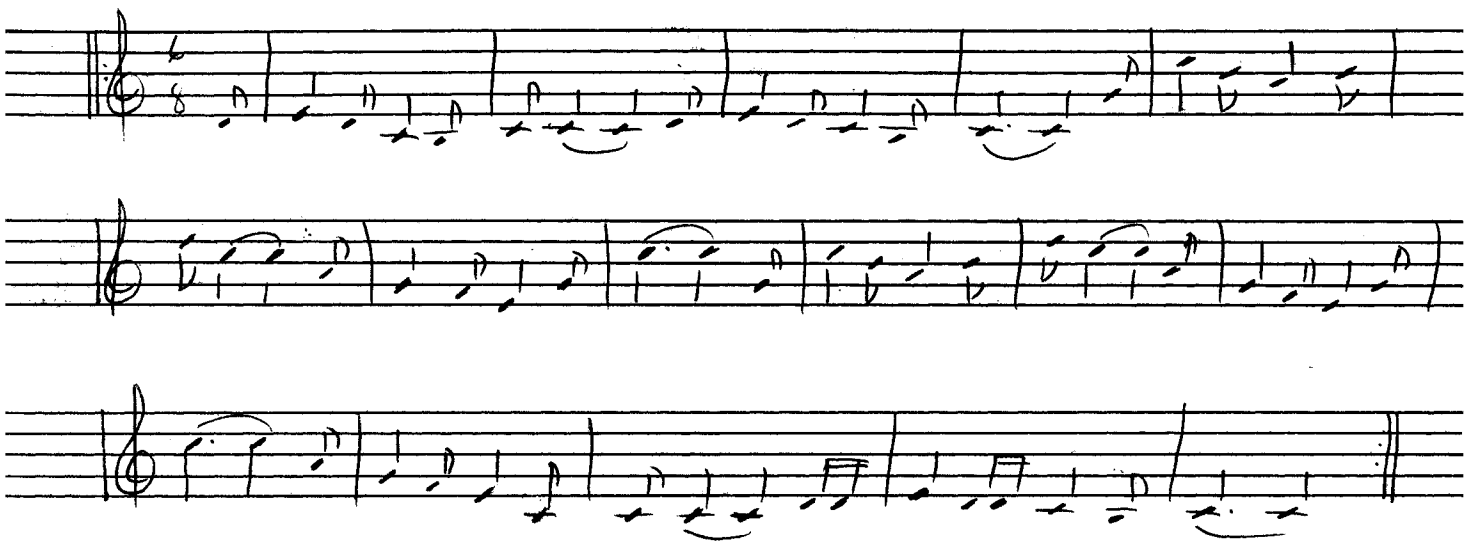
TWO WESTERN SONGS

The notable exceptions are definitely western songs, since they deal respectively with buffalo hunting and with Custer's last stand. These songs, unlike the rest in this chapter, are of the West, although each of them stems ultimately from eastern sources. Buffalo hunting was never practiced in the East, and Custer, as every schoolboy knows, died on the Little Big Horn, "way out in Montana."

THE BUFFALO SKINNERS

Recorded at the Ft. Howes Ranger Station near Ashland, Montana, June 27, 1947. Sung by Charlie Thax.

This song is printed under the same title in LOMAX REV, LOMAX, LARKIN, POUND, BOTKIN, and SANDBURG.



The Buffalo Skinners

1. Come, all you jolly buffalo skinners, and listen to my song,
And don't you go a-wearied, it will not take me long,
Concerning some buffalo skinners that did agree to go
And spend one pleasant summer on the range of the buffalo.

2. It was on the twenty-first of May, I landed in Jacksboro.
Old Crego by name one morning came to me.
"Good morning, my jolly young fellow, and it's how would
you like to go
And spend one pleasant summer on the range of the buffalo?"

3. Me being out of employment, to Crego I did say,
"This going out on the buffalo range depends upon the pay,
But if you'll pay good wages and transportation too,
I think I'd like to go with you and skin the buffalo."

4. "Of course we pay good wages, fine transportation, too,
Provided you don't grow homesick, come back to Jacksboro,
Then we won't pay transportation from the range of the
buffalo."

5. So after all his flattering talk we made up quite a train,
Some five or six in number of strong able-bodied men.
Our trip it was a pleasant one the way we had to go
Until we crossed the river on the range of the buffalo.

6. It was there our pleasures ended and troubles then began.
The very first tail I went to rip, Christ, how I cut my hand.
This tail was very salty and strong with gypsum too.
God knows there's no more hell on earth than among the buffalo.

7. Strong coffee (crude?) and water to drink and a bull hide for a bed.
The way the gray backs and mosquitoes eat on us it was not slow;
They like to eat us poor devils up while skinning the buffalo.

8. The summer being over, old Crego would not pay.
He said the outfit had been so extravagant he wasn't . . . . . that day,
But we showed him on the skinning that bankrupt wouldn't go,
And left old Crego's bones to bleach on the range of the buffalo.

9. And now all we crossed Pease River and homeward we were bound,
No more in this devilish country, no more we'd ever be found.
Go home to wives and sweethearts and tell others not to go
Up in this cursed country on the range of the buffalo.

"The Buffalo Skinners" is an adaptation of an earlier eastern American folksong known by several titles, including "Canaday-I-O," "Michigan-I-O," and "Collie's Run-I-O." According to Linscott, the probable original, "Canaday-I-O," is "said to have been composed by Ephraim Braley, a lumberman who lived in Hudson, Maine, near Oldtown, and was probably written about 1854. The song is based on an old English sea song--in turn derived from an older love song, 'Caledonia,' first printed in 1800."[1]

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1 LINSCOTT, p. 181.

The western adaptation of "Canaday-I-O," which apparently came from Maine by easy stages, through the northeastern woods and Michigan--"Michigan-I-O"--is best dated between 1873, the date mentioned in the song, and 1883, when the buffalo was almost extinct.[2] The herds on the plains of Texas, Oklahoma, and southern Kansas and Colorado had been virtually gone since 1876.[3] Abbott says that in Montana "the boats [on the Missouri] quit in '83, when the Northern Pacific railroad went through, and the buffalo were finished the same year."[4] Although it may be a retrospective production, the song was probably adapted sometime in the same decade, 1873-83, that saw the near annihilation of the buffalo.

During the seventies, the hunting of buffalo for their hides, which were used both for robes and for leather, was a profitable and much practiced business. Wellman says:

> Out on the plains in the '70's went the buffalo hunters by the thousands. A good hunter could kill a hundred and fifty to two hundred animals a day--the number limited only by the ability of the skinners to keep up with him. So many hunters were at work all the time that old-timers have told me that on a clear morning the firing sounded like a fair-sized battle in progress.[5]

The buffalo hunters were usually not the highest type of men.[6]

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2 E. Douglas Branch, Westward (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1930), p. 568.

3 Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Ginn and Co., [c. 1931]), p. 44.

4 E. C. Abbott and Helena Huntingdon Smith, We Pointed Them North (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, [c. 1939]), p. 156.

5 Paul I. Wellman, The Trampling Herd (New York: Carrick and Evans, Inc., [c. 1939]), p. 214. For details of the method of hunting and skinning, see Branch, op. cit., pp. 565-6.

6 Ibid., p. 215.

With this opinion Abbott agrees:

> The buffalo hunters was a rough class--they had to be, to lead the life they led. That buffalo slaughter was a dirty business. They would have two skinners working with each pair of hunters, and the hunters would go out and round up a bunch of buffalo and shoot all they could. The skinners would follow after in a wagon and take the hides. But when it got dark they would quit, leaving maybe ten or twenty carcasses that would freeze up solid, and next spring they would just lie there on the prairie and rot, hides and all. Riding the range you would find lots of skeletons with pieces of hide still sticking to them. It was all waste.[7]

Charlie Russell paints an even more vivid picture of this grim business:

> These skin hunters didn't waste much lead; they had killin' down to a fineness, goin' at it in a business way. They hunted afoot, an' most of 'em used glasses. When Mister Skin Hunter leaves camp he's loaded down with ammunition, an' packin' a gun that looks an' weighs like a crowbar. He prowls along the high country till he sights the herd; then gettin' the wind right he keeps the coolees till he sights the range, an' it don't have to be close, 'cause these old Sharp's pack lead a thousand yards. First he picks out a cow on the edge of the bunch, an' pullin' down on her he breaks her back. Of course she starts draggin' her hindquarters an' makin' all kinds of buffalo noise. Quicker than you'd bat your eye, her neighbors 're 'round her wantin' to know what's the matter.
>
> Buffalo 're like any other cow-brute; kill one, an' they don't notice it much or 're liable to quit the country; cripple one an' start the blood, an' it's pretty near a cinch they'll hang 'round. The hide hunters know this trick an' most of 'em use it. When the herd gets to millin', he goes to work pourin' lead into 'em as fast as he can work the lever on his breechblock. Whenever one tries to break out of the mill, there's a ball goes bustin' through its lungs, causin' it to belch blood, an' strangle, an' it ain't long till they quit tryin' to get away an' stand an' take their medicine. Then this cold-blooded proposition in the waller settles down to business, droppin' one at a time an' easin' up now an' again to cool his gun, but never for long till he sees through the smoke the ground covered with still, brown spots. Then layin' down his

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7 Abbott, op. cit., p. 120.

> hot weapon he straightens up an' signals the skinners that's comin' up behind. They've located him by the talk of his Sharp's.
>
> This is what the hunters called 'gettin' a stand'; there's nothin' taken off the animal but the hide an' sometimes the tongue. The rest goes to the wolves. These hide hunters 're the gentleman that cleaned up the buffalo, an' since the bone gatherers come there ain't nothin' left to show that there ever was any. I've seen a few buffalo myself, but the big herds was gettin' pretty seldom when I hit the country. I guess you've all heard them yarns about how they used to stop the boats on the Missouri, an' how wagon-trains would have to corral for days, lettin' a herd pass.[8]

By such methods, millions of buffalo were slaughtered. The peak number of buffalo in the United States is not accurately known, but the number left when the hunters finished was almost zero.

> Nobody knows how many bison were on the plains at the peak of their numbers. Ernest Thompson Seton, the naturalist, has estimated seventy-five million ranging from Northern Mexico to Central Canada and from the Alleghenies to the Cascades, in the period just before the Indian acquired the horse. In the '60's General Sheridan computed that there were one hundred million in the Southern plains alone. Yet in a space of one decade those vast herds were wiped out, and in a manner so cold-blooded and methodical that it left the world aghast.[9]

Since the hide of the buffalo was the only part of the animal sought for commercial purposes, the rest of the carcass was left on the plains to rot, a sheer waste.

> That year the buffalo were still so thick that Mr. Lays had only to say: "Mr. Alderson we're out of meat"; and he would go out and find a herd and kill a calf, all just as easily as a man would butcher a yearling steer in his own pasture. Yet when I came out, one year later, there was nothing left of those great bison herds, which had covered the continent, but carcasses. I saw them on my first drive out to the ranch, and they were lying thick all over the flat above our house, in all

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8 Charles M. Russell, Trails Plowed Under (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1927), pp. 41-2.

9 Wellman, op. cit., p. 213.

> stages of decay. So wasteful were the hunters, they had not even removed the tongues, though the latter were choice meat.
>
> The summer after I came out 1883 Mr. Alderson killed the last buffalo ever seen in our part of Montana south of Miles City.[10]

Such was the business of the buffalo hunter, about whom the song is concerned, a unique fellow, without parallel in the history of the West or any other part of the country, who in the course of a little over ten years all but exterminated the American bison. He will remain unique, and this song will, perhaps, keep alive the memory of a practice gone with the old West.

Changing the older songs like "Canaday-I-O" to fit the circumstances of the buffalo skinners was not a difficult task. An alteration in the details in one or two stanzas, and the replacement of Canaday-I-O with "the range of the buffalo" were not major changes. "Michigan-I-O," for instance, begins:

> It was early in the season, in the fall of sixty-three,
> A preacher of the gospel, why, he stepped up to me.
> He says, "My jolly good fellow, how would you like to go
> And spend a winter lumbering in Michigan-I-O?
>
> I boldly stepped up to him, and thus to him did say,
> "As for my going to Michigan, it depends upon the pay.
> If you will pay good wages, my passage to and fro,
> Why I will go along with you to Michigan-I-O."[11]

The parallels with "The Buffalo Skinners" are obvious in these lines and throughout the song.

Among the variants of the western adaptation examined there are no significant differences. In all, Jacksboro is the point of departure, Grego is the employer, the buffalo hunting ground is beyond the Pease River (in the northern Texas panhandle), and

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10 Hennie T. Alderson and Helena Huntingdon Smith, A Bride Goes West (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, c. 1942), p. 16.

11 GARDNER, p. 261.

in all but the Montana version the time of departure is the spring of '73; the Montana song names only the day, May 21. Indians are not numbered among the menaces in the Montana variant, but are in all of the others. Most of the other variants include somewhat more detail, but they all tell the same story, and in all of them Crego's bones are left to bleach on the range of the buffalo.

There is nothing in the Montana variant to indicate that any effort has been made to adapt it to conditions in this state. A somewhat less good variant than some of the others examined--it contains two stanzas of only three lines--the Montana "The Buffalo Skinners" is simply a western folksong sung, among other places, in this state.

An interesting further adaptation of this song is "Boggy Creek," in which a cowboy is substituted for the earlier Buffalo skinner and still earlier lumberman:

> Come all you old-time cowboys and listen to my song,
> But do not grow weary, I will not detain you long;
> It is concerning some cowboys who did agree to go
> To spend one summer so pleasantly on the trail to Mexico.
>
> I found myself in Griffin in the spring of '83.
> A noted cow drover one morning came to me,
> Saying, "How do you do, young fellow, how would you like to go
> And spend one summer pleasantly out in New Mexico?"[12]

A situation like the one in "The Buffalo Skinners" develops, and the drover's bones, like Crego's, are left to bleach, in this case in New Mexico.

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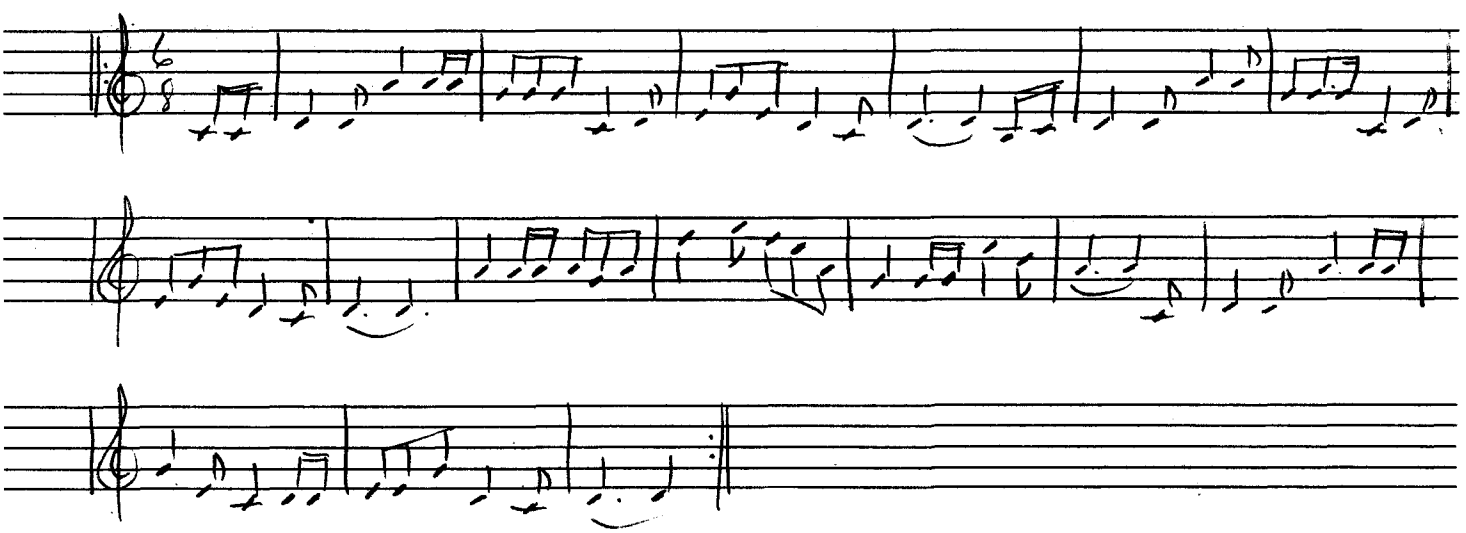
12 LOMAX REV, p. 41.

The next song, like this one, is an adaptation of an earlier song; its locale is not the West in general, but Montana in particular.

CUSTER'S LAST FIGHT

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 9, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

This song or fragments of it is printed in FOUND NEB and EDDY (A and B) as "The Last Fierce Charge," in JAFL XLV and MACKENZIE as "The Battle of Fredericksburg," in BELDEN (A) as "The Fight at Bunker Hill," in BELDEN (B) as "The Soldier Boys," in RANDOLPH (A) as "That Last Fierce Fight," and in RANDOLPH (B) as "The Comrade's Last Brave Charge."



Custer's Last Fight

1. It was just before General Custer's last fight,
Two soldier boys drew their rein.
With a parting word and a touch of the hand
They never might meet again.
One was a boy with curly hair,
Nineteen but a month ago.
Red rosy cheeks and a dimpled chin,
He was only a boy you know.

2. The other was tall, dark, daring, and brave,
His fate in this world was dim,
But he only trusted the more in one
Who was all this world to him.
They had rode together in many a raid,
They'd marched o'er many a mile,
But ne'er before had the frown of fate
E'er (?) altered their peaceful smile.

3. The tall dark lad was the first to speak,
Said, "Charlie, my time has come.
We'll ride together out in this fight,
But you will ride back alone.
We'll ride together to the crest of the hill,
But you will ride back alone.
There's a little trouble I want you to take
For me when I am gone.

4. "I have a face upon my breast,
I'll wear it into this fight.
With her bright blue eyes and curly hair
Just like the morning's light.
Like the morning's light was her life to me,
It gladdened my lonely life.
Then what cared I for the frown of fate?
She promised to be my wife.

5. "Oh, write to her, Charlie, when I am gone,
Send back this fond fair face.
Tenderly tell her where I fell
And where is my resting place.
Tell her I've gone to the border land
With heaven and earth between.
I'll watch and wait for her coming there,
For it won't be long, I ween."

6. Tears filled the eyes of the curly haired boy
And his words came low as pain.
"I'll do your bidding as a comrade's call
If I ride back again.
But if you ride back and I am left,
Will you do as much for me?
I have a mother to learn the news.
Will you write to her tenderly?

7. "One after another she's lost them all,
She buried a father and son.
Now I her last my country's call
She cheered and sent me on."
Just then the order came to charge.
For an instant hand touched hand.
They answered "aye" and on they rushed,
Those bold and devoted men.

8. But e'er they reached the crest of the hill
The redskins (shouted hail?)
Made drifts of death of their manly forms
And cheered them as they fell.
Among the dead that were left behind
Were the boy with curly hair,
And the tall dark lad that rode by his side
Lay dying by him there.

9. Oh, who will write to the curly haired girl
Those words her lover had said?
An anxious mother may watch and wait
But her only dear boy is dead.
She never will know those last fond words,
Those words would ease many a pain,
Until she crosses the river of death
And stands by his side again.

According to MacKenzie, the original of this song may have been written as early as the second year of the Civil War. It was during that year that the Union army under General Burnside was defeated with heavy casualties by the Confederate army under General Lee at Fredericksburg.[13] Belden terms it "patently literary" but further states that he does not know the author.[14] He does not speculate about the possible date of composition.

The Montana variant was not sung until some time after

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13 MACKENZIE, p. 298. For a complete account of the battle see Francis Winthrop Palfrey, The Army in the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, [c. 1881, 1885]), vol. IV, The Antietam and Fredericksburg.

14 BELDEN, p. 383.

1876, of course, the year when Custer made his famous last stand on the Little Big Horn near Hardin, Montana.[15] It is unquestionably an adaptation of the song about the earlier battle. Only two changes were necessary to adapt the song admirably to a new situation: "the last fierce charge" or "the last brave charge" of the earlier versions became "General Custer's last fight"; and the enemy became "redskins" rather than "rebels." These two alterations, small as they are, completely changed the time and locale of the events in the song, which immediately became a western ballad. Stanzas one and eight of "The Last Fierce Charge" will show the close similarity between the original song and the Montana adaptation:

> It was just before the last fierce charge
> Two comrades drew the rein
> For a parting word and a touch of hand,
> They might never meet again.
> One had blue eyes and curly hair,
> Nineteen but a month ago,
> The red on his cheek came down to his chin,
> He was only a boy, you know.
>
> Just then the order came to charge,
> For instant hand touched hand;
> They answered, "Aye," and on they rode,
> A calm and hopeful band.
> They rode till they came to the brink of the hill
> Where the rebels with shot and shell
> Poured right and left with their toiling ranks
> And cheered them on as they fell.[16]

The nature of the song makes any other changes than those noted unnecessary, since it is not so much concerned with the battle itself as with the devotion of the two friends

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15 For accounts of the battle, see Lieut. Col. W. A. Graham, The Story of the Little Big Horn (New York: The Century Co., [c. 1926]) and Fred Dustin, The Custer Tragedy (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1939).

16 EDDY, pp. 301-3.

and with their ironic deaths. A better adaptation might have noted that it was the Indians, and not Custer, who charged to the crest of the hill; but generally speaking, the Montana song fits the situation it purports to record.

Stanza eight of the Montana variant preserves an interesting bit of folklore from the original:

> Made drifts of death of their manly forms
> And cheered them as they fell.

The legend that the Confederate soldiers cheered the Union troops for their bravery even in the face of withering fire is apocryphal, but it persists in most of the variants of "The Battle of Fredericksburg" and has uncritically been included in the adaptation. The Indians may have cheered, but the song probably preserves rather the legendary cheers of the Rebels.

While the song about the battle of Fredericksburg is rather widely known, the Montana variant apparently has only local currency. The great interest in the Custer massacre at the time suggests that such a song should have been popular, but evidently it was not, for reasons unknown. It is a song peculiar to Montana.

Although the rest of the songs in this chapter are not about the West, they have been sung in the West. Most of them are importations from other parts of the country.

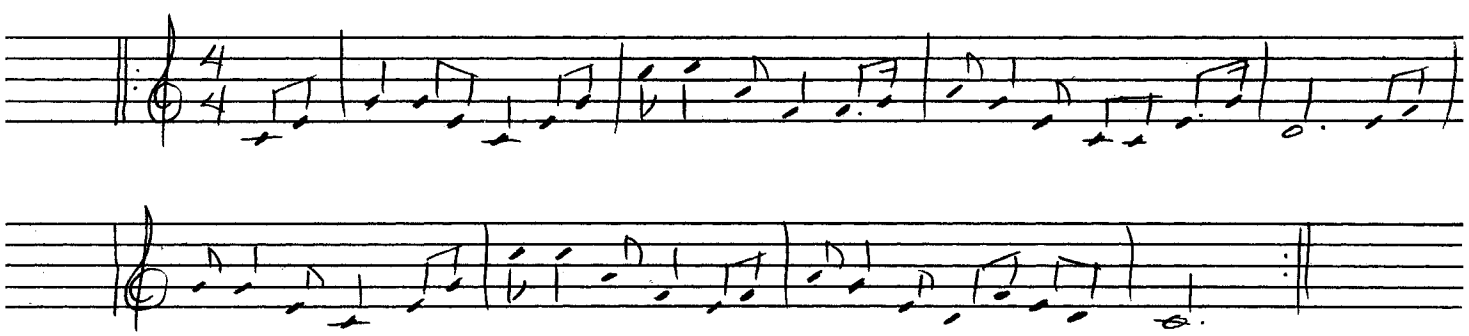
RAILROADER AND GAMBLER

Although the railroader and the gambler were not as prominent as cowboys on the western frontier, they were there at about the same time. Railroading had been a part of the American scene for some time, and gamblers have always flourished in all

parts of the country, especially where there was quick money to be gained. The following two songs may have been brought into the state by railroader and gambler, but more likely by some anonymous singer who simply liked what they had to say.

THE WRECK OF OLD NUMBER NINE

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 9, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.



The Wreck of Old Number Nine

1. 'Twas a cold winter's night, not a star was in sight,
And the north wind come howling down the line.
Stood a brave engineer with his sweetheart so dear,
And with orders to pull old Number Nine.

2. Oh, he kissed her goodbye with a tear in his eye,
And the joy for his heart he couldn't hide,
For the whole world looked bright when he told her
that night
Tomorrow I'll be your blushing bride.

3. Oh, the wheels hummed a song as the train rolled along,
And the black smoke come pouring from the stack.
With his headlight agleam seemed to brighten his dream
Of tomorrow when he'd be going back.

4. Oh, he sped round a hill, there his brave heart stood still,
For a headlight come gleaming in his face.
Then he whispered a prayer as he threw on the air,
For he knew this would be his final race.

5. In the wreck he was found lying there on the ground;
He asked them to lave his weary head.
As his breath slowly went this message he sent
To the maiden who thought she would be wed.

6. "There's a little white home that I bought for our own,
There I dreamed we'd live happy by and by.
Now I leave it to you, cause I know you'll be true;
Till we meet at the Golden Gate, goodbye."

This song cannot be called a folksong, even by the loose definition set up in this paper, on the basis of one performance in Montana. The fact that no variants were found indicates either that it is not widely known or that collectors of folksong do not consider it to be properly within their realm. However, the writer has heard it sung on two or three occasions, and Dr. Joseph Hall reports that it was popular in North Carolina and Tennessee in 1937-41. He states that a phonograph record was made of it, using a text similar to if not identical with the one above. The Montana singer could conceivably have learned it from the record.

The internal rhyme suggests that it is of literary origin. It is probably of a late date, one of the songs in the tradition of "Casey Jones"(circa 1900). Although there is nothing in the stanzas to indicate it, it is probably from the Midwest or the East rather than from the West.

The second stanza of the Montana variant is somewhat confused, inasmuch as the last two lines read:

For the whole world looked bright when he told her that night
Tomorrow I'll be your blushing bride.

Obviously the second line should read,

Tomorrow you'll be my blushing bride.

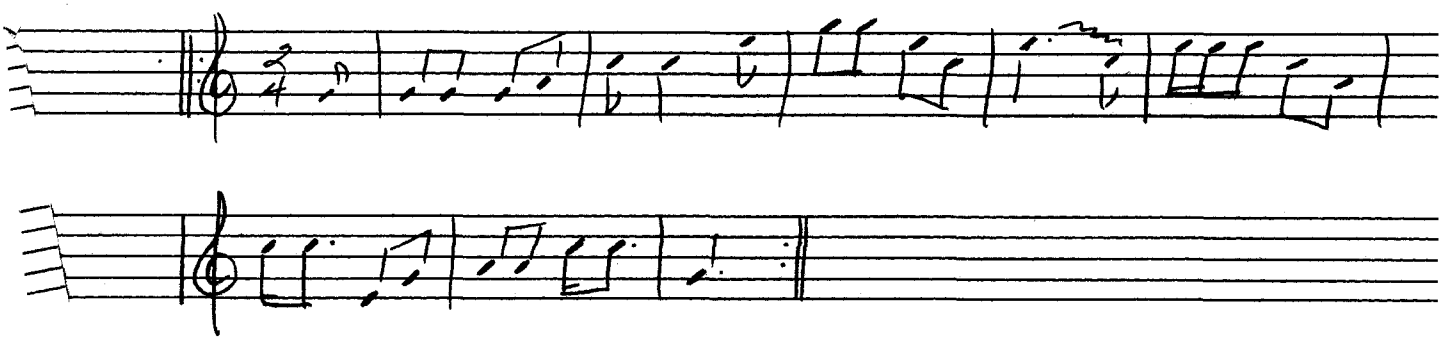
Except for this error and minor irregularities in syntax, the song is clear enough.

There is more than sufficient evidence for calling the next song a folksong.

THE ROVING GAMBLER

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 7, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

The song appears in JAFL XXXIX, BOTKIN, and SANDBURG (A) under the same title, in GARDNER as "The Roaming Gambler," in BELDEN (A) as "The Guerilla Boy," in BELDEN (B) as "The Roving Soldier," and in SANDBURG (B) as "The Gamboling Man."



The Roving Gambler

1. I am a roving gambler,
And I gamble down in town.
Whenever I meet with a deck of cards
I lie my money down.

2. Well, I had not been in Washington
Not many more weeks than three
When I fell in love with a pretty little girl,
She fell in love with me.

3. She took me to her parlor,
She cooled me with her fan,
She whispered low to her mother's ear,
"I love my gambling man."

4. "O daughter, O dear daughter,
How can you treat me so?
For to leave your kind old mama dear,
With a roving gambler go!"

5. "O mother, O dear mother,
You know I love you well,
But the love I have for the gambling man
No human tongue can tell.

6. "He's gambled down in Washington,
He's gambled down in Spain."
I'm a-going down to Washington
For to gamble my last game.

7. O, I hear that train a-coming,
She's a-coming around the curve,
She's applying all her steam and power
And a-straining every nerve.

8. "O mother, O dear mother,
You know I love you well,
But the love I have for the gambling man
No human tongue can tell."

Unlike most of the songs considered in this paper, this one is an importation from Europe. It is a derivation, according to Belden, of "The Roving Journeyman," of probable Irish origin, and "frequent in British stall print."[17] Sandburg

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17 BELDEN, p. 374.

reports that it is "the popular song of English origin from which the southern and western minstrel troupes made their verses."[18] Like other ballads and songs brought to this country from Europe, it has undergone many changes. It is probably older than most of the other songs in this collection, a fact which explains differences in variants greater than in the others; it has been undergoing change longer.

The main narrative can be easily traced through all the variants. The hero, sometimes a roving gambler and sometimes something else, meets and falls in love with a girl, who also falls in love with him. Although her mother objects to the match, the girl is insistent, and leaves with her new-found love. All of the variants agree on this much.

There the disagreement begins. As the titles of the different versions indicate, the hero is not always, as in the Montana song, a gambler. He is variously identified as a guerilla boy, a soldier, and a "gamboling" man (probably a corruption of "gambling" man). Nor does his conquest always take place in Washington; Dallas and Bloomfield (Missouri) are two other places mentioned. In addition, there are other, less noticeable differences in detail, all of which tend to make the variants somewhat more distinctive than those of most of the other songs in this paper.

One detail which stands out because it is common to all, despite its seeming inconsequence, is the cooling with a fan. In all but one of the variants,

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18 SANDBURG, p. 312.

She took me to her parlor,
She cooled me with her fan.

The idea involved has for some reason appealed to all the perpetuators of the song. That this particular detail, which is not important, should be so widely preserved is strange, especially when there is so much divergence in the other details.

Besides these changes in the main narrative, there are some interesting additions in many of the variants. The Montana version, for instance, introduces a somewhat irrelevant stanza about a train, a stanza remarkably like one from a negro spiritual called "The Gospel Train":

I hear the bell and whistle,
A-comin' round de curve,
She's playin' all her steampow'r
An' strainin' ev'ry nerve.[19]

Similar stanzas, undoubtedly additions made after the song came to America and not part of the original, have been incorporated into the variants printed in GARDNER, BOTKIN, and SANDBURG (A).

Other such additions and incorporations have been made in American variants of this song, though not in the Montana version. In Belden (B), "The Roving Soldier," these lines appear:

I eat when I get hungry,
I drink when I get dry,
And if the Rebels don't kill me
I'll live until I die.[20]

Although the lines fit fairly into the context in this case, they are obviously from another song. A western song, printed

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19 LUTHER, p. 219. For a better complete version of the song, see Newman I. White, American Negro Folk-Songs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 441-2.

20 BELDEN, p. 376.

among other places in LOMAX REV, contains the same lines:

> I'll eat when I'm hungry, I'll drink when I'm dry;
> If the hard times don't kill me, I'll live till I die.[21]

Which borrowed from the other is impossible to say; perhaps both have incorporated a floating motif or lines from still another song.

Another extraneous idea has got into the song, though not into the Montana variant:

> I wouldn't marry a farmer, for he's always in the rain;
> The man I want is the gambling man who wears the big gold chain.
>
> I wouldn't marry a doctor. . .
>
> I wouldn't marry a railroad man. . .[22]

The original for these stanzas in the Sandburg (A) variant may be "The Railroader," of which the following stanzas are the third and fifth:

> I would not marry the farmer,
> He's always in the dirt:
> I'd rather marry the railroader
> Who wears the striped shirt.
>
> I wouldn't marry the merchant;
> He's always sure to die.
> I'd rather marry the railroader
> Who has the pretty blue eyes.[23]

This too may be a floating motif.

At any rate, "The Roving Gambler" has had a long and interesting life, its complexities the result of its age and wide currency.

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21 LOMAX REV, p. 164.

22 SANDBURG, pp. 312-13.

23 BELDEN, p. 377. See also LINSCOTT, pp. 211-12, and FOUND, pp. 208-9.

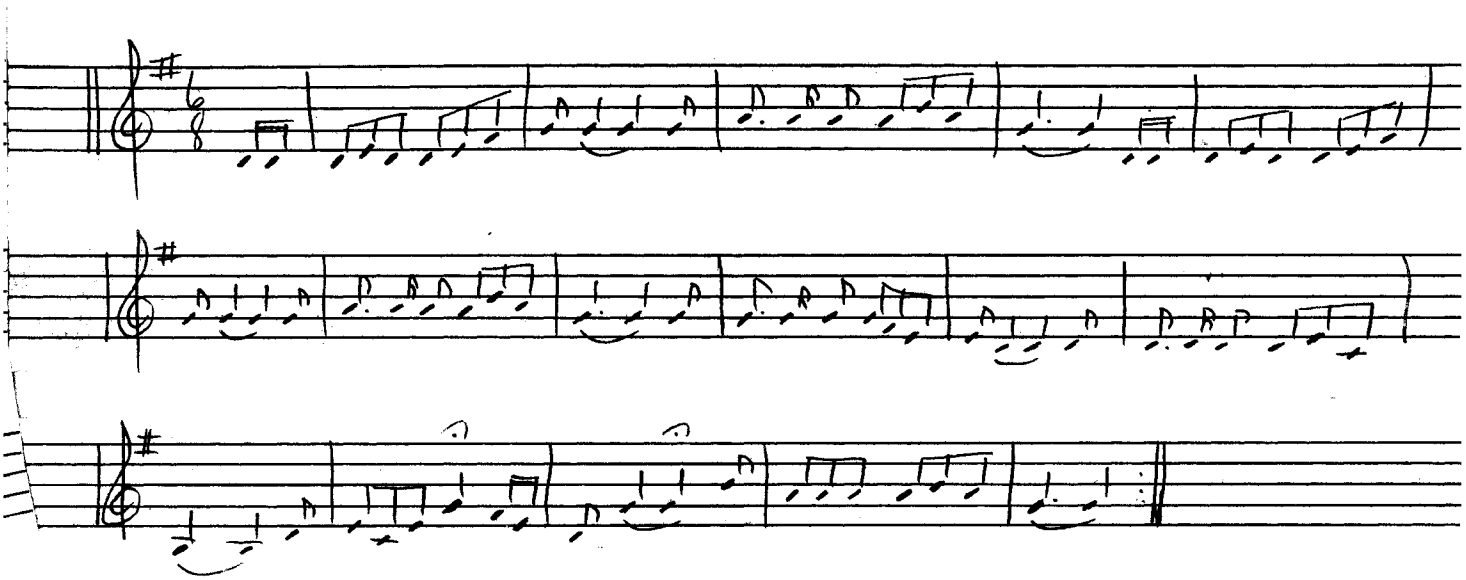
LOVE SONGS

The songs in this section, while not in the familiar boy meets girl formula, at least all have something to do with love.

JOE HARDY

Dictated at Brandenburg, Montana, July 3, 1947, by Julian Terrett.

The song appears under the same title in LUTHER, and a fragment is printed in BELDEN as "The Wounded Spirit."



Joe Hardy

1. You know that you once were my lover,
   But that sort of thing has an end.
   Love and its transports are over,
   But you know you can still be my friend.
   I confess when I read your first letter
   I blotted your name with a tear;
   I was young then, but now I know better.
   Could I tell that I'd meet Hardy here?

2. Don't kneel at my feet I implore you,
Don't write on the music you bring,
Don't ask me to say I adore you,
For indeed now I do no such thing.
I confess when at Bangor we parted
I vowed that I worshiped you then.
I was a maid broken-hearted
And you the most charming of men.

3. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
O, my, how you fret, how you worry
. . . . . .
I love you indeed as a brother,
But my heart is Joe Hardy's alone. *

Luther attributes this song to James Pierpont, and says that it was sung by a group known as the Continental Vocalists to audiences in eastern America about 1855.[24] Mr. Terrett, who dictated the song, learned it from his mother, a Virginian, who may have heard this group or someone else sing it, or may have learned it from print. The song as sung by Mr. Terrett is, except for the order of stanzas and the parts left out, almost identical with the variant printed by Luther. (Belden's fragment is similar as far as it goes.)

This song, of known literary origin, should not be termed a folksong until more instances are offered of a wide currency in an oral tradition. It may be a folksong, despite its origin, just as some of Stephen Foster's songs are now folksongs, but the evidence presented here is not conclusive. However, the method of transmission in this case, an oral handing down from mother to son, is typical of the method by which folksongs

---

24 LUTHER, p. 161.

* The dots in this text indicate that the singer could not remember the words; in other texts, all taken from phonographic recordings, they indicate unintelligible words.

are preserved.

The mention of Bangor is the only indication of locale. A substitution of some other town could change that locale from Maine to Iowa, Texas, or Montana with no disturbance to the content. This is not a western song, though it is known in the West, but simply an American song.

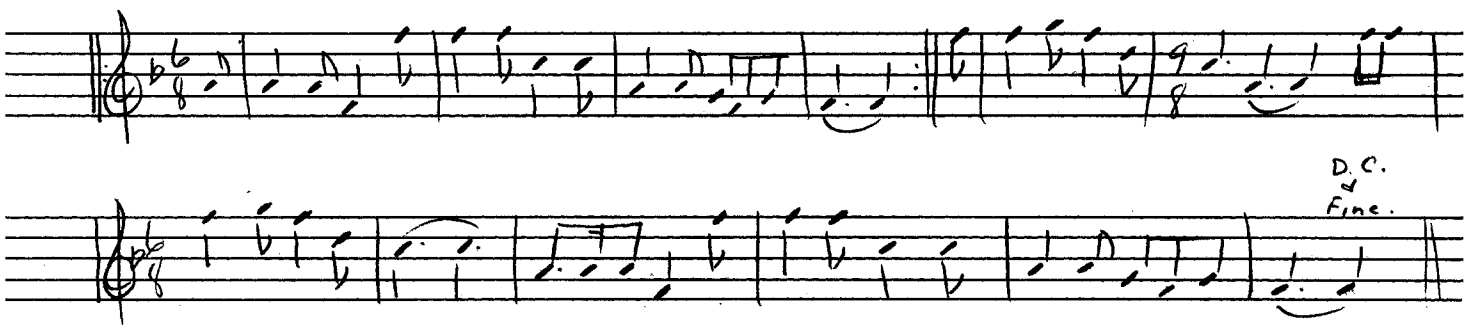
Unlike most folksongs, and certainly unlike most of the songs in this paper, "Joe Hardy" is in form dramatic rather than narrative. While others are dramatic in part, they do not maintain the form throughout as this one does.

The next song, narrative in form, is much more sentimental.

THE PRISONER AT THE BAR

Recorded in Ashland, Montana, June 18, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

A Mississippi variant, the only one discovered, is printed under the same title in JAFL XXXIX.



The Prisoner at the Bar

1. The judge was there, the jury too,
And people from afar.
A handsome lad, a tender youth
Was prisoner at the bar.

2. The great court room was crowded
With an eager anxious throng.
Many a heart was aching for
That lad accused of wrong.

3. A maiden fair with golden hair
Swept swiftly through the crowd.
The people gazed in wonder but
Spoke not one word aloud.

4. Then turning to the judge's stand,
One moment did she pause.
Smiling through her tears she said,
"Judge, let me plead the cause.

5. "Judge, your mind must wander back
To those long years gone by.
See your sweetheart and yourself
Just like this lad and I.

6. "You have children of your own.
I'm sure you will agree,
Lest you aim to blight our lives,
Don't say that we must part."

7. The judge arose up from his seat.
The court was still as death.
He wiped a tear drop from his eye,
And spoke with faltering breath.

8. "I have a little girl at home
With just such baby eyes.
Seeds of mercy scattered here
Will flourish in the skies."

9. The jury did not leave the room,
For they were quick agreed.
The foreman briefly signed a note
And gave the clerk to read.

10. "Not guilty" were the only words
The maiden heard him say.
Her lover pressed her to his breast.
Love always finds a way.

Another song not exclusively western, this one is perhaps of sourthern origin; the only other variant examined comes from Mississippi. Dr. Joseph Hall reports that it is sung in the Great Smokies of Tennessee as "Judge and Jury." Nothing in the text indicates any special geographical location. It may have come north with the southern people who helped settle the West, since many songs came to Montana via Texas and the early cattle trails, for instance. Or it could conceivably be a recent importation by means of radio or phonograph; the singer admitted having learned several of the songs in his collection that way.

No evidence is at hand by which to judge its age. A purely speculative guess is 1890. However, it could be any time before 1926, when the Mississippi variant was printed.

Both variants of this overwhelmingly sentimental song tell essentially the same story about what must be the most unusual trial and defense plea on record. The tearful plea by "the maiden fair with golden hair," the judge's tender response, and the quick decision by the jury all appear in both versions. Neither, however, even hints at the crime of which the youth is accused; the size of "the eager anxious throng" suggests that the charge was a serious one.

One incident in the Mississippi variant does not appear in the song from Montana, the announcement of the impending marriage of the defendant and his advocate, and the dogmatic statement by the girl that the youth is innocent. In all other respects the variants are the same.

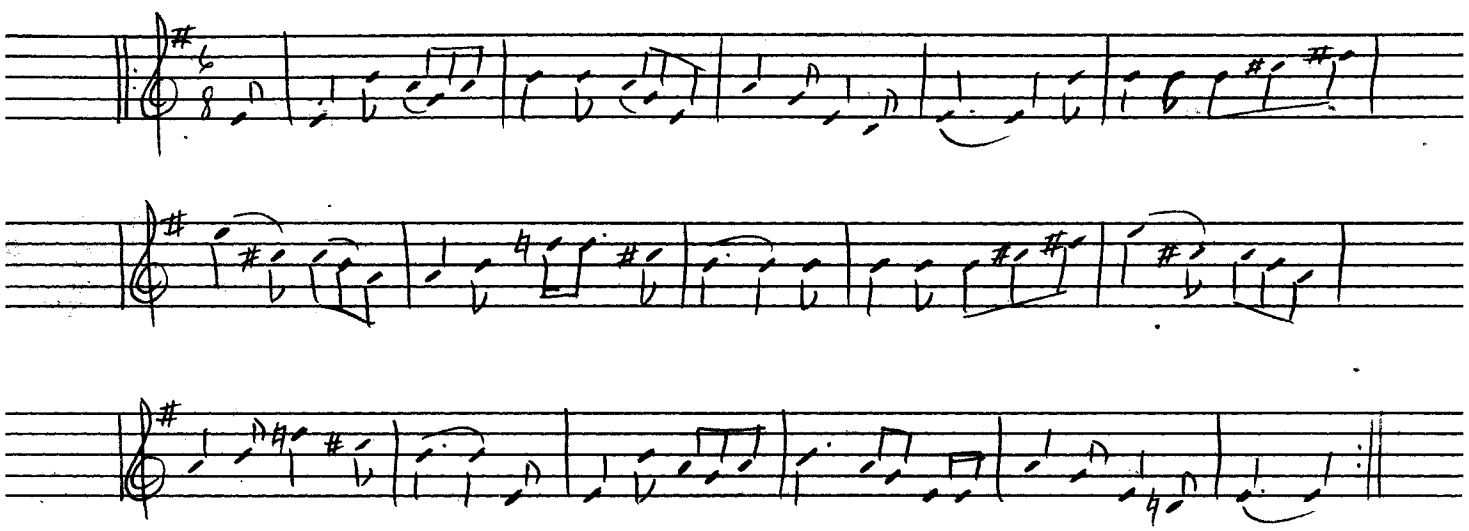
How popular this song was in its own time is hard to say.

It is apparently not widespread among folk singers now, since it has not been recorded in any of the standard collections, but it may have flourished in print when it was written. Such sentimentality was perhaps once more appealing than it is now. In the opinion of this writer, the song deserves any obscurity it may achieve.

THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 9, 1947. Sung by "Montana Bill" Roberts.

The song, or fragments of it, may be found in RANDOLPH (A) and GARDNER under the same title, in BOLLES as "The Rocking Chair Song," in JAFL XXVIII as "When I Became a Rover," in BELDEN (A) as "Peggy Walker," in BELDEN (B) as "The False Hearted Lover," in JAFL LII as "There Was a Rich Old Farmer," in COX as "My Parents Reared Me Tenderly," in THORP, LOMAX, and LOMAX REV as "The Rambling Cowboy," in LOMAX REV as "Lackey Bill," and in RANDOLPH (C and D) and BELDEN (C) without title.



The Girl I Left Behind

1. My parents raised me tenderly,
They had no boy but me.
But I been fond of roving,
At home I couldn't agree.
So I became a rover soon,
Which grieved their hearts full sore,
To leave my aged parents
I ne'er will see no more.

2 There was a rich old merchant,
He lived in Iowa Park.
He had an only daughter dear,
And I had gained her heart.
A noble-minded girl was she,
Most beautiful and fair.
There's not a girl in this wide world
With her I could compare.

3. I told her my intentions were
Soon for to cross the main,
And asked her if she'd prove true to me
Till I returned again.
Great drops of tears came in her eyes,
Her bosom heaved a sigh.
"Go there," said she, "weep not for me.
My love will never die."

4. She was generous-hearted I believed,
Her mind once more was calm.
With her loving arms around my neck
She taken me by the hand.
She pressed me closely to her cheeks,
As kissing was no fear.
I'll swear by the heavens above us both
I should have proved sincere.

5. According to agreement
I stepped aboard the ship,
And to the town of Alasky
I had a pleasant trip.
'Twas there I found gold in plenty
And girls to me were kind,
But I found my love had cooled a bit
For the girl I'd left behind.

6. To (Vanthrip?) town I then set out,
That (gleeful?) Irish land.
There handsome Jennie Ferguson
Come taken me by the hand.
Saying, "I've got gold a-plenty
And a love with you I find,
If you'll consent to marry me
From the girl you left behind."

7. To this I soon consented,
But, oh, 'tis to my shame,
For how can a man live happy
When he knows himself to blame?
It's true I've gold a-plenty
And a wife that's somewhat kind,
But I know my pillow is haunted
By the girl I left behind.

8. My father's in his winding sheet,
My mother doth appear,
And the girl I left behind me
Still wiping away her tears.
Since broken-hearted all have died,
And now too late I pine.
May God forgive my cruelty
To the girl I left behind.

This song, "obviously of British origin," is the oldest of any considered in this paper, although not so old as the Child ballads.[25] Belden says that is has been "since the eighteenth century the favorite farewell song of British soldiers and sailors, frequently issued by the ballad press."[26] Recorded in both Scotland and England as well as in numerous places in the United States, it has been adapted in different parts of the United States to fit the locale, so that in the West it becomes something of a cowboy song. The Thorp and Lomax versions, for instance, substitute "cross the plains"

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25 RANDOLPH, I, 215.

26 BELDEN, p. 198.

for "cross the main," and Texas or Arizona for Ireland or Scotland as destinations. Thorp attributes the western song to K. Tolliver.[27] A couple of stanzas of the Thorp variant will indicate the similarity of the songs:

> There was a rich old rancher who lived in the country by;
> He had a lovely daughter on whom I cast my eye;
> She was pretty, tall, and handsome, both neat and very fair;
> There's no other girl in the country with her I could compare.
>
> I asked her if she would be willing for me to cross the plains;
> She said she would be truthful until I returned again;
> She said she would be faithful until death did prove unkind,
> So we kissed, shook hands, and parted, and I left my girl behind.[28]

A song as old as this one, sung and perpetuated in many parts of the country, naturally exhibits a wide variety of detail. Almost all of the variants add or change something. In two hundred years of oral tradition, the song has been altered considerably from its original form, whatever that was.

Yet there is little doubt that the variants all stem from the same original, since the basic pattern is essentially the same, and even some of the details. The song tells, in short, that the narrator was restless at home, fell in love with the beautiful daughter of a rich merchant (or farmer or rancher) of the neighborhood, and then--"I was fond of roving"--went away, leaving the girl behind. While away from her, he met another

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27 THORP, p. 134.

28 Ibid.

girl, proved untrue to the girl he left behind, and regretted his harsh treatment of her afterwards.

That is the narrative as recounted in the Montana variant and in several others. An even greater number alter one important part of it; the girl, rather than the man, proves untrue, as in the better known "Little Mohee," to which this song bears a strong general resemblance. All of the variants follow one version or the other of this plot more or less closely. In no case do the man and girl remain true to each other.

The minor details vary so considerably in the many variants that it is impossible to do more than indicate a few examples. The father of the girl is a merchant, farmer, gentleman, or rancher, depending upon the variant, and characterized always as wealthy, rich, noble, or worthy, and often as old. The girl herself is variously described as noble-minded, true, tall, high-minded, pretty, young, handsome, slender, charming, neat, fair, and delicate. None of these differences is important as far as the main movement of the narrative is concerned, nor are the places the man visits when he leaves his girl behind: Glasgow (probably in the original version), Alaska, Salt Lake City, Montana, Scotland, Kansas, Missouri, Allen City, Texas, Arizona, and Tombstone City. These and many other differences in detail occur as the result of the age and wide currency of the song.

By almost any standard, and certainly by the one set up for this paper, "The Girl I Left Behind" is a folksong, one

sung widely throughout the country. How it happened to get to Montana, particularly in its original form rather than the form adapted for the West, is unknown but not inexplicable; wherever people go, they take their folksongs along, and in this country they go everywhere.

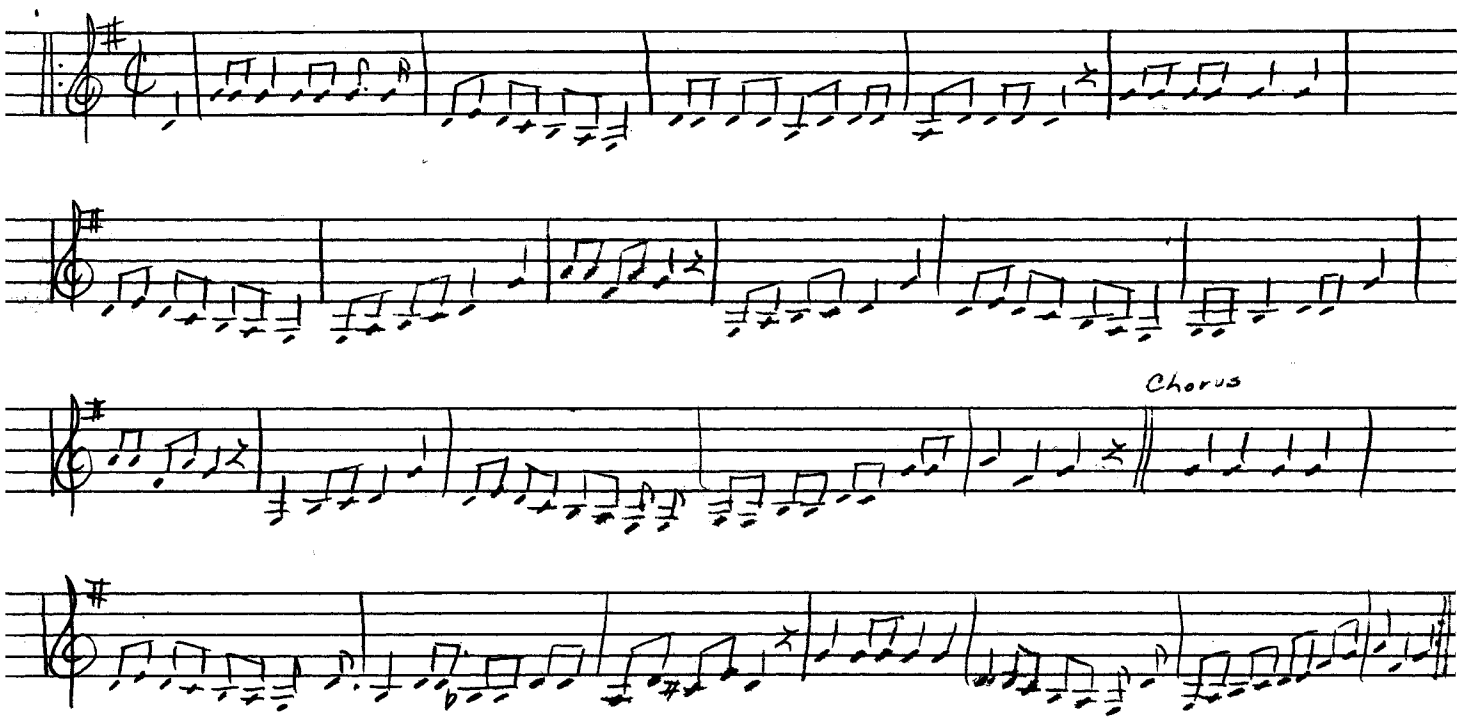
HUMOROUS SONGS

The following songs may or may not be folksongs, the evidence in each case indicating no wide currency.

MAGEE'S BACK YARD

Recorded at the Ft. Howes Ranger Station, near Ashland, Montana, June 27, 1947. Sung by Charlie Thex. The text here printed is from a manuscript from Thex, the tune from his own performance.

BEECHAM prints the song as "McGee's Backyard."



Magee's Back Yard

1. I went to see Miss Magee; I did it surreptitiously.
Things were far from pleasant when I came to say "Good Night."
Father's on the front steps, waiting for me viciously,
Touser's in the back yard spoiling for a fight.
I went out the back way, Touser gave the preference.
Neatly he laid for me and met me with a growl.
I spoke to him a kindly word of preference;
He sidled 'round behind me and at once got foul.

Re. I grabbed, dog grabbed, Touser got the best of it;
We both grabbed together; the dog grabbed very hard.
I got the coat tail but Touser got the rest of it;
I left my Sunday britches in Magee's back yard.

2. Old Magee the britches found, patched a dozen holes or more
And when he wore his long-tailed coat it looked so very nice.
He thought he had a dandy scheme--he'd start him up a clothing store,
Inviting two young men to call another night.
He went out the back way to give the dog shame (read "chain"?) enough;
The moon was hid behind the cloud, the dog could scarcely see;
He didn't know his master by he knew the trousers well enough
So it wasn't half a minute 'til he grabbed Magee.

Re. Man grabbed, dog grabbed, Touser got the best of it,
They both grabbed together but the dog grabbed very hard;
The fence caught the coat tail, Touser got the rest of it
And he left his Sunday britches in his own back yard.

3. Old Magee felt sore indeed; some explosive he did buy
And in an old tin kettle did he prepare a deadly bomb.
The dog for him had made it hot, he swore for him he'd make it hot;
He tied it to his dog's tail to lead him to his doom.
The dog espied a black cat and made a savage dash for it.
It took but a slight blow the powder to ignite.
The kettle struck a brick wall--then a dreadful tragedy;
Everything around about was scattered out of sight.

Re. Dog flew, bomb flew and bomb secured the best of it;
They both flew together but the bomb flew very hard.
The kettle struck a hill top, the dog a mile west of it
And there wasn't a visage left of Magee's back yard.

According to Beecham's Portfolio No. 6,[29] Charles H. Hoyt wrote the words and Charles Zimmerman the tune to this little comic song. How it got to Montana, except in print, is somewhat of a mystery. The singer came to this state from Texas, and may have brought it with him from there. Many English songs, of course, were well known, and are still well known, in parts of the South, although many of them are of an earlier period than this one.

The Montana variant and the printed text of what is undoubtedly the original are in all essentials the same. Some confusions of words and pronunciations are present; "vestige," for instance, becomes "visage," despite the fact that the context plainly calls for the former word. The "bomb-tomb" rhyme in the original, an eye rhyme and as such not readily transmitted in oral tradition, has become in the Montana variant "bomb-doom." The diction of the Montana song differs from that of the original frequently, usually being rougher and more vigorous, although sometimes distorting slightly the meaning of the lines.

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Recorded at Ft. Howes Ranger Station, near Ashland, Montana, June 27, 1947. Sung by Charlie Thex.

No variants found.

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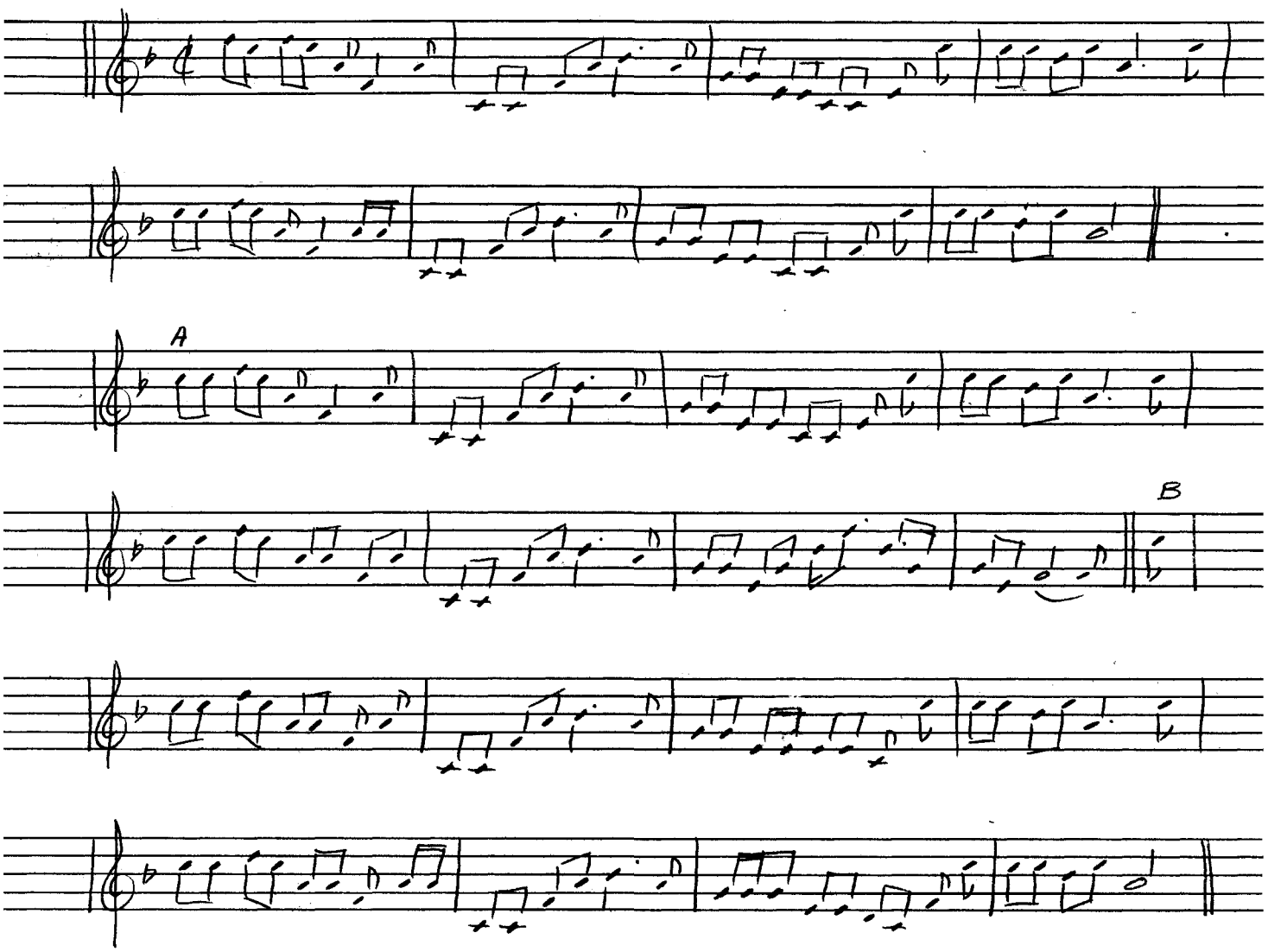
29 The date is probably around 1900, according to the owner of the mutilated copy the writer examined. The book was brought to Butte, Montana, from England by the father of the present owner.



1. SING ENTIRE SONG
2. SAY FIRST SPOKEN PASSAGE
3. REPEAT ONLY "A."
4. SAY SECOND SPOKEN PASSAGE
5. REPEAT "A" AND GO ON THROUGH "B"

The Farmer's Daughter

1. Once there lived a farmer, a good old jolly soul,
Who used to work upon his farm around his country home.
He had an only daughter, and to win her I did try,
And when I'd ask him for her hand, these words he would reply:

Re. "Treat my daughter kindly, and say you'll do no harm,
And when I die I'll leave to you my little house and farm,
My horse, my plow, my sheep, my cow, my hogs, and little barn,
And all the little chickens in the garden."

2. I own I loved this darling girl, and dearly she loved me;
I often went around the house, her smiling face to see,
To watch her milk her father's goats and admire her every charm,
And many a drink of milk I've got before I left the barn.

Spoken:
And I remember the old man would join our hands together; putting one of his on each of our heads, he would say, "God bless you, little children, but remember, young man, I'll break your back if you don't always

Re. "Treat my daughter, etc."

Spoken:
And, oh, Lord-a, how his eyes would twinkle, and how it used to tickle me every time I'd hear him say

Re. "Treat my daughter, etc."

3. I own I loved this darling girl, etc. (Repetition of stanza two.)

This song, sung like the last by a native of Texas, may also be English in origin. Obviously not a cowboy song, it contains nothing to indicate any special locale. Although the spoken portions and the repetition of a stanza in this variant seem to indicate just the opposite, there was probably order and a consistent pattern in the original, which may have been written before 1900, or at least before the day of mechanized farming since no implements, except a plow, are mentioned among

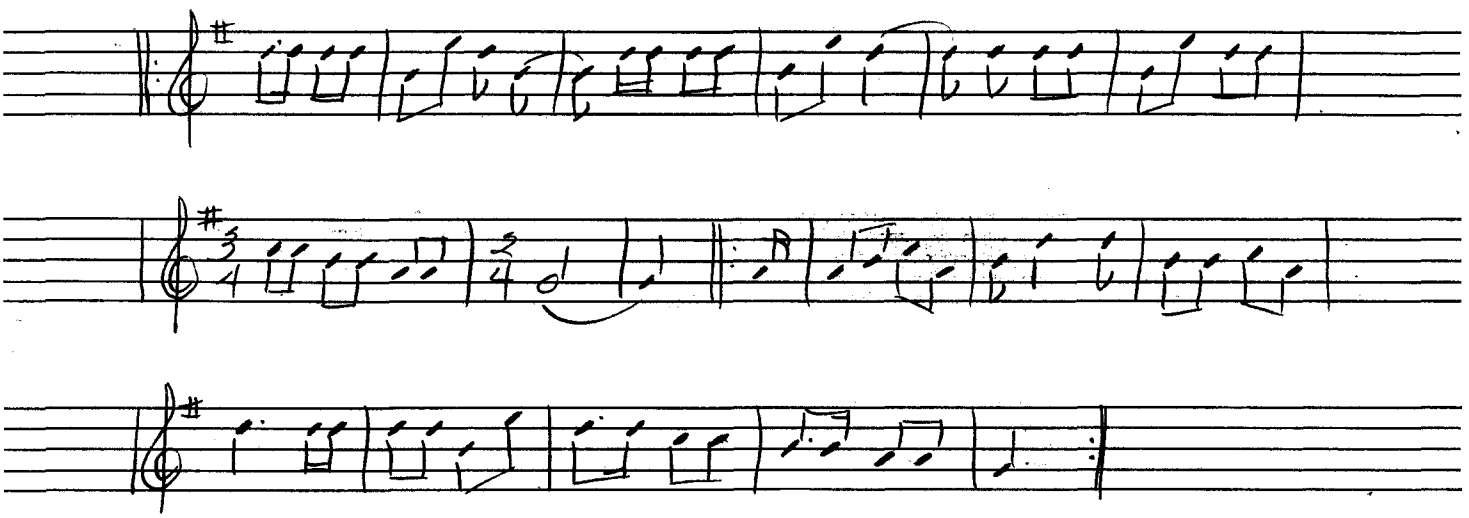
the bequests. Another reason for assigning such a date is the singer's statement that he learned it in Texas in his youth, and he has lived in Montana for over fifty years.[30]

The fact that the song is apparently not widespread suggests that it ought not to be called a folksong until more cases of its actually being repeated in oral tradition are found. It may never have had any but a limited currency.

HOW TO MAKE LOVE

Recorded in Miles City, Montana, July 10, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

No variants.



30 This is not conclusive evidence, of course. The memory is sometimes not reliable, and Thex may have learned the song in Montana.

How to Make Love

1. Do you want your girl to love you?
Do you want to be her beau?
I'll tell you how to do it, boys,
I'll tell you all I know.

2. Put on your bib and tucker
And scrub your face real hard,
Part your hair right in the middle, boys,
And slick it down with lard.

3. Put your derby hat on sideways,
Pull your dress-up pants up short,
Get a red bow tie on a rubber band
And show her you're a sport.

4. Get some drug store perfume
And sprinkle it on your clothes;
Just a dime's worth will be plenty, boys,
To tickle her pretty nose.

5. Tie a ribbon on your buggy whip,
Get a pair of yellow gloves,
And take her to the county fair,
And buy her what she loves.

6. Tell her she is prettier
Than a movie actoress,
Brag about her pretty curls,
And about her handsome dress.

7. Tell her she's so pretty
She takes away your breath,
And before you know it
She's a-hugging you to death.

8. But if she does not love you, boys,
Just make her jealous then;
Tell her you love somebody else,
That she is just a friend.

9. Take her out to the dances
And flirt with the other girls,
Hug 'em tight and whisper soft
And give 'em all a whirl.

10. Laugh out loud with the others, boys,
But to your girl don't you speak,
And when she comes around you, boys,
Then turn from her your cheek.

11. Follow these directions
And she will be your wife--
Or else she'll marry somebody else
And hate you all her life.

Although no other variants of this song were found in print, Dr. Joseph Hall sent a stanza of a somewhat similar song from a recording he made in the North Carolina Smokies:

When you go a-courtin', boys, I'll tell you what to do;
Put your arms around her and pull her up to you;
Hug her and kiss her and look her in the eye,
Beat her on the back, boys; root, hog, or die.

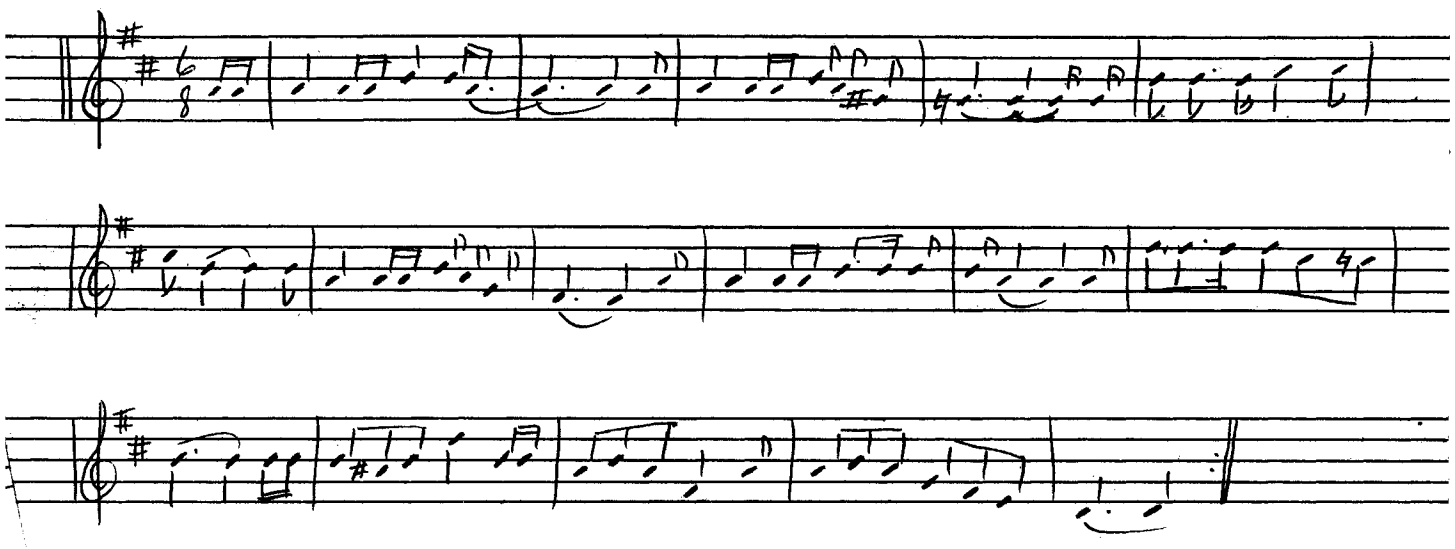
This is not the same song, probably, and incorporates material from still another, "Root, Hog, or Die," but it is similar in spirit and content. Dr. Hall says that the opening lines are apparently a common formula, like the familiar "Come all ye;" he reports another North Carolina song beginning "If you want to have fun, I'll tell you what to do."

Another song which only more evidence of its being widely sung will establish as a folksong, "How to Make Love" is probably of recent origin; the mention of buggy whip and movie "actoress" suggest a date of composition during the years when these two aspects of culture coincided. The derby hat and red bow tie argue against western origin or inspiration. But these are only speculations; the facts about the song are unknown to the writer.

SEVEN BEERS WITH THE WRONG WOMAN

Recorded in Ashland, Montana, June 18, 1947. Sung by Bob Quebbman.

No variants.



Seven Beers with the Wrong Woman

1. Seven beers with the wrong woman,
We sat at a table for two.
First thing I knew she whispered,
"Oh, boy, I could sure go for you."
My heart beat a little bit quicker
As I held her sweet little hand;
I swelled up with pride, but oh, how she lied--
I sure was a foolish young man.

2. Seven beers with the wrong woman,
Then she made me get up and dance.
Around and around we circled
Till I missed the money from my pants.
I asked her if she had seen it,
She smiled up at me and said no,
But to this day to me it's a big mystery--
Now I wonder just where it did go.

3. Seven beers with the wrong woman,
Her husband walked in after that.
When he seen us together
He walked up and give me a slap.
He grabbed me by the seat of my breeches
And he sure did kick up a sweat;
Then I got tossed out the door by the boss,
And he told me to never come back.

4. Seven beers with the wrong woman,
It left me with only regret.
I guess she must of been foolin'
When she called me her darling and pet.
Now I wish the Lord had made Adam
And never made anyone else;
But there's one thing I know, that the next place I go
I'll buy fourteen beers for myself.

This song is obviously a parody of "Seven Years with the Wrong Woman," copyright 1932 by Mills Music, Inc., attributed to Bob Miller. Whether Miller is the composer or only the arranger for an already existing folksong the sheet music does not say. The former circumstance seems more likely. The first of the four stanzas of Miller's song reads:

Seven years with the wrong woman
Is more than a man can stand.
Seven years with the wrong woman
Will wreck 'most any good man.
Seven years with the wrong woman--
It's the same in the mountain or dale--
She'll stay awake all night trying to start a fight,
Then have you thrown in jail.

The similarity between this original and its parody is readily apparent, and the tunes are almost identical. If one of the songs is not the original and the other the parody, they both sprang from a common predecessor.

The Miller song, reminiscent in some ways of "I've Got No Use for the Women," is not so interesting a song as the parody, in the opinion of the writer. If either lives in folk tradition--a remote possibility--it will be the parody.

V

EPILOGUE

The materials that provide the basis for this thesis are part of the results of the first large scale folksong collecting project undertaken in Montana. While short in duration, small in area, and experimental in nature, the project was perhaps the beginning of further work in the same field, work which, the results of the first trial suggest, will be highly rewarding.

The musical and textual transcriptions which are presented in this paper are the first made from the Montana folksong collection, which is as yet only in rough form, that is, on phonograph records and in journals. Some of the songs printed here may never have been printed before, as the comments accompanying them indicate; all of them are here printed for the first time as a Montana collection. It is hoped that the presentation and study of these songs is valuable as a contribution to the sum of knowledge about the state.

Since the body of material available for study is relatively small, no statements of a general nature may be made about folksongs in Montana at the present time. Further collecting and subsequent analysis of the results might lead investigators to certain general conclusions about Montana folksongs and their relationship to the folksongs of other parts of the country; until such a collection and analysis are made, only such limited conclusions as are presented in

various sections of this paper may be considered valid.

Cowboy and Indian, buffalo skinner and outlaw, farmer and soldier, gambler and sheriff--these are the stuff of which many Montana folksongs are made. This study is made in the hope that it may help to preserve the songs and the tradition that created them.

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